

## ***The Ancient World From c. 1400 to 586 B.C.***

### **I. Introduction**

THE historical period discussed in this article began about 1400 B.C., when Israel invaded western Palestine under the leadership of Joshua, and closed with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The beginning of this period coincides with the beginning of the decline of Egyptian power in Asia. The strongest power in the north was that of the Hittite kingdom. This, however, disappeared under the onslaught of the Sea Peoples two centuries later. Afterward the Assyrians came to the forefront and by brute force formed an empire that eventually reached from the highlands of Iran to the southern border of the Egypt. Babylonia, which during all this time existed only as a shadow of its former illustrious self, finally threw off the shackles of the Assyrian yoke and took its place once more as a short-lived but glorious empire.

An understanding of the history of these and other nations is essential to a correct understanding of the ancient history of the people of God, who struggled for their existence among various local nations in Palestine first under tribal leaders, the judges, then under kings, who were able to build a respectable kingdom and hold it together for a little more than a century. This, however, broke up into two rival kingdoms, each of which was too weak to withstand the forces pressing for control over Palestine, the vital land bridge between the two most important regions and civilizations of antiquity, Egypt and Mesopotamia. The northern kingdom of Israel was finally swallowed up by the Assyrians and completely disappeared from history after the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C. The southern kingdom of Judah held out for almost another century and a half, but finally succumbed to the Babylonians. However, the religious vigor of the Jews preserved their national unity even in exile, with the result that Judah emerged from captivity a strong and united people.

The purpose of this article is to study the historical background of this most important and interesting period; to view the rise, decline, and fall of kingdoms and empires; and to observe how the people of God were influenced by the events, cultures, and civilizations of their time. Also, a brief survey of the history of the people of Israel is presented, first, divided into tribal organizations under the leadership of judges, later as a united body under three successive kings, and finally as two separate and rival kingdoms.

Since the Bible writers who have provided the bulk of available source material for a reconstruction of the history of Israel were its religious leaders and reformers, they viewed the history of Israel in the light of the people's obedience or disobedience to God, and recorded it as such. This is the reason that for some periods, when the people went through special crises or possessed outstanding leaders, our sources are plentiful, whereas for others they are pitifully meager, and leave great gaps that our present knowledge is as yet unable to bridge. The reader must therefore be aware that a historical sketch of the people of God in the times of the Old Testament is sketchy in some parts and well rounded in others.

The same is also true in regard to the history of the other ancient nations, all periods of which are not equally well covered by reliable source material. In some cases the events of centuries are not yet known. The discovery of more original source material must be awaited before a reconstruction of ancient history in all its aspects becomes possible. The following survey represents the present state of knowledge, based (1) for the greater part on documentary evidence that has become available since the ancient

languages written in various hieroglyphic or cuneiform scripts were resurrected, in the early 19th century, and (2) on the wealth of material preserved by the sand and debris of centuries and in recent decades brought to light by the scribe of the excavator.

## **II. Egypt From the Amarna Age to the End of the Twentieth Dynasty (c. 1400-c. 1085 B.C.)**

**Chronology of the Period.**—Although an unassailable chronology of Egypt prior to about 660 B.C. has not yet been established, with the exception of that pertaining to the Twelfth Dynasty, our dates for the empire period—dynasties Eighteen to Twenty—are approximately correct. Slight variations in the dates given by various historians and chronologers are found, but are never greater than a few years. In fact, the chronology of this period has hardly been changed since it was established during the last century—in contrast with the chronology of all previous periods, which has been decreased by centuries for some periods and by millenniums for others.

It is not possible to enter into the intricate problems of ancient chronology here, and it may suffice to state that the dates of the empire period of Egypt are based on astronomical texts dated to the reigns of certain kings, on historical, dated records extant from that time, and on lists of kings from various sources. The dates presented in this section are thus based on all available source material, and cannot be off by more than a few years from the true dates. The margin of error is certainly not greater than 25 years, and is probably smaller than 10 years. The given dates can therefore be considered as relatively correct and are presented as such.

**Egypt in the Amarna Age (Eighteenth Dynasty).**—Moses witnessed the rise of Egypt to become the strongest political power of his time. During his life the empire established by Thutmose III reached from the border of the Abyssinian highlands in the south to the river Euphrates in the north. The wealth of the Asia and Africa poured into the Nile country, where temples like those of Karnak, Luxor, Deir el-Bahri, and others were erected, so colossal that they have withstood the destructive power of both man and nature for millenniums, and have been the marvel of many generations of visitors.

When Israel was in the desert, from about 1445 to 1045 B.C. (see Vol. I, pp. 188–194), the Egyptian Empire was held together by the strong and ruthless hands of Amenhotep II (c. 1450–1425 B.C.) and of his son Thutmose IV (c. 1425–1412 B.C.). With the next king, Amenhotep III (c. 375 B.C.), a man came to the throne who enjoyed the full fruits of the empire his fathers had built, without expending much effort himself to hold it together. He had been a great hunter in early life and had led one military campaign to Nubia, but lived thereafter in magnificent luxury and leisure and spent his last days as a fat weakling with decayed teeth, as the abscesses in his mummy show. He married Tiy, who, as the daughter of commoners, was nevertheless a remarkable woman of whom Amenhotep was proud. Nevertheless, there was also a great influx of foreign blood into the royal family, for there were brought into the king's harem princesses from several foreign kingdoms, the most important being Gilukhepa, of the Mitanni. That northern Mesopotamian kingdom, ruled by Indo-European Hurrians, had formerly been the greatest rival to the power of the earlier kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, but was now cultivating friendly relations with Egypt.

Amenhotep III apparently considered the wealth of Asia and Africa, regularly coming to him by way of tribute, as something that had always enriched Egypt, and would continue to do so without any further effort on his part. He did not notice the distant

rumblings of the breakup of his Asiatic empire. The Hittites in the north, unruly local princes in Syria and Palestine, and the intruding Habiru in those same countries nibbled away at the edges of the empire, and must have occasioned a noticeable decrease in the revenue of Egypt. But the lazy Pharaoh did nothing to stem the tide of imperial decay.

**Ikhnaton.**—Near the close of his reign Amenhotep III made his son Amenhotep IV (Ikhnaton) coregent. His sole reign lasted from about 1375 to 1366 B.C. He is one of the most controversial personalities of history. While one scholar characterized him as the “first individual in history,” “a very exceptional man” (Breasted), another described him as “half insane” (Budge). Two recent authors speak of him as “the most fascinating personality who ever sat on the throne of the Pharaohs” (Steindorff and Seele), and another describes him as effeminate, abnormal, and dominated by women (Pendlebury).

Amenhotep IV, or Ikhnaton, as the king called himself after his religious revolution, broke with the traditional Amen religion of Egypt, and elevated Aten, the sun disk, to be the supreme and only god of the realm. Himself a physical weakling, he was possessed of a strong will power, and made a vigorous attempt to stamp out the religion and cult of Amen. Since Thebes was too strongly connected with Amen, Amenhotep moved the capital to another site several hundred miles down the river, where he built a city called Akhetaton, and vowed never to leave that place. Here he was surrounded by his followers, courtiers, poets, architects, and artists. With his encouragement, these men developed the new, realistic form of art that had only recently been introduced in Egypt. Artists painted and modeled their objects, not according to the traditional idealistic style, as had been the custom, but as they appeared to the eye—beautiful or ugly. Up to this time, for example, every king, whether old or young, handsome or ugly, had been depicted as a youthful and vigorous man—the ideal god-ruler. This was all changed now. The king was sculptured and painted in all his ugliness with a protruding abdomen, an elongated skull, and a long chin. His aging father was depicted as having a fat, sacklike figure.

Emphasis was also placed on *ma‘at*, which has been translated “truth,” but which means also “order,” “justice,” and “right.” Accordingly, things were to be seen as they are, not as they ought to be—really rather than ideally. In this principle the young king was far ahead of his time and could not be understood, and for this reason his revolution failed. However, his artists produced some of the masterpieces of all time, as, for example, the bust of Nefertiti, now in the Berlin Museum, and mural paintings of birds and plant life that have not been surpassed in beauty by painters of other periods, ancient or modern.

The king’s new religion has been called monotheism—a belief in one universal god. It is, however, highly questionable whether this term can rightly be applied to the brand of religion Ikhnaton introduced. It is true that he never worshiped any other god than Aton after the revolution, but his subjects did not worship Aton. They continued to worship the king as their god, as they had before, and he not only tolerated but apparently required this continued worship of his person.

Either the king or some poet of his time composed a hymn to Aton, praising the sun disk as the creator-god. Since this hymn is in certain respects parallel in wording and composition to the 104th psalm, some scholars have thought the latter to be a Hebrew edition of the Aton hymn. There is, however, no valid evidence to support this assumption, since any poet, glorifying a certain god as the supreme god of creation, who

produces and preserves life and well-being, will use terms and expressions that are somewhat similar to those found in the Aton hymn or the 104th psalm.

The king was married to beautiful Nefertiti, whose world-famous bust, found in a sculptor's studio at Amarna, is one of the masterpieces of ancient art. The royal couple had six daughters, but no sons. However, the family life seems to have been very happy and natural, as contemporary pictures reveal. Never before did an Egyptian king have himself and his family depicted as did this monarch, kissing one of his daughters, or caressing his wife.

While Ikhnaton built palaces and sun temples in his new capital, and sponsored a naturalistic art far advanced for his time, his henchmen went through the country trying to eradicate the old religion by chiseling from all monuments the names of all other gods but Aton. The temples were closed, and the priests lost their customary allowances. That this policy created a deep-seated enmity in conservative circles can easily be understood. This feeling of hatred against Ikhnaton was increased by the gradual decrease in foreign revenue, which resulted in greater tax burdens for the Egyptian citizens, and simultaneously impoverished the population. This situation resulted from the gradual breakup of the empire. The first signs of the weakening power of Egypt in Asia had been evident under Amenhotep III, but they became more manifest under the weak rule of Ikhnaton, who lived his new religion, chanted hymns to Aton, refused to leave his new capital, and apparently did not care that the foreign possessions built up by means of the numerous military expeditions of his illustrious ancestors were being lost, one after another.

**The Amarna Letters.**—The rich archive of cuneiform tablets found in the ruins of Ikhnaton's short-lived and ill-fated capital, Akhetaton, now called Tell el-'Amarna, contains much information concerning the contemporary political situation in Palestine and Syria. These hundreds of clay tablets, found in 1887 (see Vol. I, pp. 106, 126, 139, 168, 189), come from the official files of correspondence between the Palestinian and Syrian vassal princes and Pharaoh, as well as from the friendly kings of Mitanni, Assyria, and Babylonia. Few discoveries have shed more light on a limited period of the ancient world than have the Amarna Letters on the time of the kings Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV (Ikhnaton).

These letters reveal clearly the waning influence of Egypt in Asia, as the powerful Hittites pressed against the Egyptian Empire and occupied a number of regions in northern Syria. Local Asiatic dynasties quarreled one with another, the more powerful overthrowing the weaker and thereby enlarging their own power and territory. The most notorious among these princes, who pretended to be vassals of Egypt but fought against Egyptian interests wherever they could, were Abd-Ashirta and later his son Aziru of Amurru. They extended their domain over a number of neighboring wealthy areas, such as Byblos, Beirut, and other Phoenician coastal cities.

In Palestine the situation was similar. A number of local rulers took advantage of Egypt's weakness to extend their own possessions. There were also the Habiru, who invaded the country during this time from the direction of Transjordan. One city after another fell into their hands, and those among the princes who tried to remain faithful to Egypt, like the king of Jerusalem, wrote one frantic letter after another to Pharaoh begging for military help against the invading Habiru. However, all the efforts of loyal princes and commissioners to stem the tide of rebellion and invasion were in vain.

Official Egypt turned a deaf ear to all pleas and seemed to be indifferent to what happened in Syria or Palestine. This situation is vividly depicted in the Amarna Letters, which will be referred to again in the section dealing with the invasion of Canaan by the Hebrews. It is generally believed that the Habiru of the Amarna Letters were related to the Hebrews (see Gen. 10:21; 14:13).

Toward the end of his reign, Ikhnaton made Smenkhkare, his son-in-law, coregent. Ancient records give him four regnal years, but they probably fall entirely within the reign of his father-in-law. After Ikhnaton's death, another son-in-law came to the throne, the young Tutankhaton, meaning "the living form of Aton" (1366–1357 B.C.). He was not strong enough to withstand the pressure of the conservatives, and was forced to return to Thebes to restore the Amen cult and religion. He changed his name to Tutankhamen, abandoned the capital Akhetaton (Amarna), and tried to make amends for the "heresy" of his predecessors by repairing various temples, reinstating the Amen priests, and restoring the Amen cult to its former glory. When he died, after a reign of less than ten years, he received a magnificent burial in the Valley of the Kings in western Thebes, where all the pre-Amarna kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty had been buried. Since his is the only royal tomb to remain unmolested until its discovery in 1922, with its marvelous treasures, the name of Tutankhamen has become a modern household word. He is better known than any other Egyptian king, although he was only one of the insignificant and ephemeral rulers of Egypt's long history.

Tutankhamen left no children, and his widow turned to the Hittite king Shubbiluliuma, asking him in a letter for one of his sons to marry her and become king of Egypt. The Hittite king was at first baffled at this unusual request, and made an investigation as to the sincerity of the queen. Satisfied at last with regard thereto, he sent one of the Hittite princes to Egypt, who, however, was waylaid and murdered en route. This was probably arranged by Eye, one of the most influential courtiers of the previous Pharaohs. He forced Tutankhamen's widow to marry him and accordingly ruled Egypt for a few years (1357–1353 B.C.). He usurped not only the throne but also the mortuary temple and statutes of his predecessor.

When Eye in turn died, after a reign of about four years, the reins of government were taken over by the former army commander, Harmhab, who ruled for 34 years (1353–1320 B.C.). He is usually counted as the first king of the Nineteenth Dynasty. Harmhab seems to have been less tinged with the Amarna revolution than his two predecessors, and was therefore more acceptable to the priesthood and to the conservatives of the country. He began to count his regnal years from the death of Amenhotep III, as if he had been the legitimate ruler over Egypt during the time of Ikhnaton, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamen, and Eye. These four rulers were henceforth regarded as having been usurpers, "heretics," and are therefore not mentioned in later king lists. Thus, Amenhotep III was officially followed immediately by Harmhab.

The first task Harmhab set for himself was that of restoring internal order and security in Egypt, which seems to have been badly disrupted during the previous decades of weak rule. His edict, still extant, was issued "to establish order and truth, and expel deceit and lying." Priests were given special privileges in the judicial system, and severe and cruel punishments were threatened for abuses of power by officers of the realm. Since all his energy seems to have been needed for a restoration of order in the country, he had neither time nor power to regain the Asiatic possessions which by this time had completely been

lost. Since the death of Thutmose IV in 1412 B.C. no Egyptian king had been seen in Syria or Palestine, with the result that the Pharaoh was no longer known or feared there. This situation was advantageous to the Hebrews, who probably began their invasion of Palestine in 1405, and were able in succeeding decades to establish themselves there without interference on the part of the kings of Egypt.

**The Nineteenth Dynasty.**—Dying childless, Harmhab was followed by his appointed successor, the general of the army, Ramses I. An old man, Ramses I died after a short reign (1320–1319 B.C.), and left the throne to his son, Seti I (1319–1299 B.C.). With him a new era began, and once more the power of Egypt was felt. He made determined and partly successful attempts to regain the Asiatic possessions. Records carved on Egyptian temple walls and on a great stone monument found in the excavation of Beth-shan, at the eastern end of the Valley of Esdraelon, in Palestine, disclose that the king invaded Palestine during his first year. His chief aim was to regain some of the important cities which, in times past, had been occupied by Egyptian garrisons, and to control once more the trade routes to the fertile and rich Hauran in northern Transjordan. With three divisions, he claims to have attacked and conquered the cities of Yano'am, Beth-shan, and Hamath (south of Beth-shan) simultaneously. His victory stele found in Beth-shan shows that he reoccupied the city and stationed an Egyptian garrison there. He then crossed the Jordan and occupied certain rich areas in the Hauran, according to another victory monument found at *Tell esh-Shihāb*, about 22 mi. east of the Sea of Galilee.

After Seti I had reoccupied certain important cities in western Palestine and Transjordan, he turned to Syria and reconquered Kadesh on the Orontes, according to his official records carved on the temple walls at Karnak and from the fragment of a victory stele found at Kadesh itself. On a later campaign Seti I advanced even farther north, to punish the renegade kingdom of Amurru and to force the Hittites to recognize certain rights of Egypt over northern Syria. Once more, loot from Syria and cedarwood from the Lebanon came to Egypt, although not in the quantities of a century earlier. However, Egypt once more enjoyed the satisfaction of being the proud ruler of foreign regions and peoples in Asia, although the new empire was but a shadow of the former one.

During the reign of Seti I a freer interchange of culture began to take place between Egypt and Asia than even before. Canaanite deities, such as Baal, Resheph, Anath, Astarte, and others, were accepted into the Egyptian cult system. The Egyptian religion lost its isolation and some of its national peculiarities. From now on more emphasis was placed on magic, ritual, and oracles, with the gods Fortune and Fate taking a more important role in the religious life of the Egyptians.

**Ramses II and the Hittites.**—The policy of reconquering the Asiatic empire was continued by the next king, Ramses II (1299–1232 B.C.), whose reign was exceptionally long. The fact that he usurped many Egyptian monuments by exchanging his name for those of his royal predecessors, making it appear that these monuments had been erected by him, together with great building activity of his own, made Ramses II more famous than he deserved. The name of no other Pharaoh is found so often on ancient monuments as that of Ramses II. As a result, earlier Egyptologists attributed fame to him out of all proportion to his accomplishments.

When Ramses II came to the throne the Hittite king Mutallu advised a Syrian prince to hasten to Egypt and pay homage to the new king, perhaps as a precaution, since no one

could know what the young Pharaoh might do. As time passed and there were no marked signs of determination on the part of Ramses to hold on to his Asiatic possessions, the Hittite king organized a confederacy of Anatolian and Syrian states, which not only proclaimed its own complete independence, but also annexed other Egyptian possessions in Syria. Its combined army of some 30,000 men was determined to keep northern Syria out of the Egyptian Empire.

Ramses logically felt that he must meet the challenge of the hour. With four divisions, bearing the names of the gods Amen, Ra, Ptah, and Set, probably equal in strength to the forces of the Hittite confederacy, he marched north. The Hittite army awaited the Egyptians at Kadesh on the Orontes, where the famous battle between Ramses and Mutallu took place. This struggle was described in word and picture on numerous monuments throughout Egypt.

The Hittites sprang a trap on Ramses. The latter had picked up a pretended Hittite deserter who reported that Mutallu had retreated and left Kadesh for better defensive positions in the north, while actually he was poised behind the city of Kadesh ready to attack. Suspecting no malice, Ramses therefore marched northward. Crossing the brook El-Mukadiyeh with the division of Amen, he pitched camp on the northern bank. When the next division, that of Ra, forded the same brook, Mutallu, with part of his army, slipped over the Orontes behind the Ra division and began to attack the surprised Egyptians simultaneously from both the south and the north. Ramses' two other divisions were still on the march seven or more miles to the south while the men of the Amen and Ra divisions were fighting for their lives.

The story of how Ramses saved his army by personal heroism is legendary and needs no repetition here. His claim to have turned the imminent defeat into a brilliant victory, proclaimed on many monuments, must also be taken with a grain of salt, because the Hittites claimed likewise to have won a complete victory over the Egyptians. It is probably true that Ramses was able to save the greater part of his army and so avoid a disaster, but he can hardly have been victorious, since the contested region of Syria was retained by the Hittites and permanently lost to Egypt. Hittite texts indicate, furthermore, that the Hittites penetrated the Lebanon and extended their power over Damascus, in southern Syria, which they would hardly have been able to do if they had been defeated as Ramses claims.

During the reigns of the two following Hittite rulers, Urkhi-Teshub and Hattushilish III, relations with Egypt gradually became more peaceful, and a treaty of friendship between the two kingdoms was finally concluded in the 21st year of Ramses II. Since an Egyptian copy of the text of the treaty may be seen today on the temple walls at Karnak, and a Hittite copy has come to light from the royal archives of the Hittite capital city Khattushash (Boghazköy), we are exceptionally well informed concerning it. The two documents contain a preamble explaining why the treaty was concluded and noting that diplomatic negotiations had preceded ratification of the pact. It contains, furthermore, a declaration of mutual nonaggression but, strangely, without defining the borders of their respective geographical spheres of influence. Their alliance included mutual assistance against external enemies and internal rebels, and an agreement on the part of each to surrender political refugees to the other. The two documents close with various divine sanctions against any king who might break the provisions of the treaty.

This treaty of friendship remained in force for the remainder of the existence of the Hittite kingdom. Thirteen years after its conclusion Ramses married a Hittite princess, and a rich correspondence between the two royal houses testifies to the friendly relations that existed between them. When a famine ravaged Anatolia during the reign of Merneptah, son of Ramses II, the latter sent grain to the Hittites to alleviate their plight. After this event nothing more is heard of the Hittites. The excavations at Boghazköy have shown that the city was destroyed about 1200 B.C. by the People of the Sea, who at that time brought to an end the Hittite empire.

**Ramses II and the 'Apiru.**—Many scholars have considered Ramses II to have been the Pharaoh of the oppression. This conclusion has been reached in the first place because Ex. 1:11 states that the store cities of “Raamses” and “Pithom” were built by the Hebrews. It is pointed out that Ramses II replaced the name Tanis with his own name when he embellished that city and made it his capital. He did not, however, completely abandon the city of Thebes, where he was later buried. In addition, his long reign, marked by great building activity throughout Egypt carried on by enormous numbers of slaves, among whom the ‘*Apiru* (identified with the Habiru and Hebrews) are repeatedly mentioned, seems to many scholars to be weighty evidence for assigning the Egyptian slavery of the Israelites to the reign of Ramses II. To this is added some archeological evidence from Palestine, where the excavations of *Tell Beit Mirsim*, Bethel, and other places seem to indicate that these cities were destroyed in the 13th century B.C. and not in the 14th.

Against this theory there exist some weighty objections. Definite chronological statements made in the Bible, such as those of 1 Kings 6:1 and Judges 11:26, cannot be harmonized with an Exodus that took place in the late 13th century, but require a date for the Exodus that lies at least two centuries earlier. The period of the judges, from Joshua to Samuel, cannot be compressed into a period of some 150 years without doing violence to the Biblical narrative of that part of the history of Israel.

Furthermore, an inscription of King Merneptah, who is considered by the defenders of the 13th-century Exodus to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus, also testifies against this theory, for this inscription claims that the king encountered and defeated Israelites in Palestine. Merneptah reigned only a few years, and if the Exodus had taken place under his reign, the Israelites, who wandered in the wilderness for about 40 years, would have still been at Sinai when he died. Thus it would not have been possible for him to defeat them in Palestine. To accept Merneptah as Pharaoh of the Exodus requires, therefore, further corrections of the sacred records. Hence, it is assumed by the advocates of a 13th-century Exodus that not all the tribes of Israel had been in Egypt but that Merneptah met Israelites who had remained in Canaan.

Furthermore, evidence apparently favorable to an Exodus under Ramses II can be understood in such a way that it does not preclude the earlier Exodus recommended in this commentary. The names Rameses and Raamses in Genesis and Exodus, often pointed to as evidence of a 13th-century Exodus, probably represent a modernization of older names by later scribes (see on Gen. 47:11; Ex. 1:11). The ‘*Apiru* mentioned in texts of Ramses II as slave laborers can be Habiru or Hebrews without assuming that they refer to the Israelites who were oppressed in Egypt before the Exodus, because Ramses II may have employed Hebrew slaves in his building activity while the Israelites were in



Palestine. These slaves may have come into his hands through military activities in Palestine during the period of the judges. That the ruins of some Palestinian cities reveal no signs of destruction in the levels representing the 14th century B.C., but show them 150 years later, can also be satisfactorily accounted for. The destruction of some of the conquered cities in Joshua's time was not thorough, and the Israelites made no attempt to occupy them, but left them in the hands of the Canaanites (see on Judges 1:21, 27–33). It must also be remembered that not all identifications of ancient sites are certain. *Tell Beit Mirsim*, for example, has been identified with the city of Debir conquered by Othniel (Joshua 15:15–17), but no definite evidence came to light during the excavations that proved the correctness of an otherwise very plausible identification.

A Biblical chronology based on Solomon's beginning to build the Temple in the 480th year from the Exodus (see Vol. I, p. 191) requires a 15th-century Exodus (cf. GC v, 23; PP 204, 514, 627, 628, 703; PK 229, 230). Hence the 13th-century Exodus must be rejected, as well as the view held by many Biblical scholars, that Ramses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression and his son Merneptah the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

**Merneptah.**—When Merneptah, thirteenth son of Ramses, came to the throne in 1232 B.C. he was already an old man, and had to cope with a serious invasion attempted by the Libyans. He claims to have successfully resisted this attempt and to have made 9,000 prisoners, among whom were also more than a thousand Greeks. On his victory stele he also speaks of a campaign against several cities and peoples in Palestine, among whom are mentioned the Israelites. This important passage reads thus:

“Desolated is Tehenu [a Libyan tribe];  
Hatti [the land of the Hittites] is pacified,  
Conquered is the Canaan with every evil.  
Carried off is Ascalon, seized is Gezer,  
Yanoam is destroyed,  
Israel is laid waste, it has no (more) seed.  
Hurru [the land of the Horites] has become a widow for Egypt.”

This famous passage, already mentioned, shows that Merneptah had encountered the Israelites in one of his Palestinian campaigns, as their name, in connection with Palestinian cities, shows. Israel's location between the cities Ascalon, Gezer, Yano'am, and the land of the Horites or Hurrians is an indication where the king had met them. The first-mentioned cities lay in southwestern Palestine, whereas the name Hurru may either stand for the inhabitants of the southeastern part of the country (Edom), or be a general term for Palestine, as frequently used in Egyptian inscriptions. It is most interesting that the name Israel received the hieroglyphic determinative for “people,” and the other names have determinatives meaning “foreign country.” This indicates that the Israelites they encountered at that time were not considered a settled people, which agrees with the situation during the period of the judges as described in the Bible. Since Merneptah's campaign occurred during the period, when the tribes of Israel were still struggling for a foothold in Canaan, they could only be described on an Egyptian monument as an unsettled people—not as a nation with a fixed habitat.

Also from the time of Merneptah come interesting records kept by officials guarding Egypt's northeastern frontier, officials who may be compared to modern immigration officers. These records contain the name and function of every person crossing the border, mostly couriers in Egypt's diplomatic service. Mention is also made of an

Edomite tribe that was permitted to find temporary pasture for its flocks in the Nile Delta. These documents show that the frontier was well guarded, and that the crossing of the border was no easy matter for unauthorized individuals or groups, during the Nineteenth Dynasty.

**The Twentieth Dynasty.**—The death of Merneptah marked the beginning of a period of political chaos in Egypt which lasted for several years. A number of kings followed one another on the throne in rapid succession, one even being a Syrian. The land was eventually rescued from this sorry state of affairs by a man of unknown origin named Setnakht, who became the founder of the Twentieth Dynasty. When he left the throne to his son, who became Ramses III (1198–1167 B.C.), Egypt once more had a strong and energetic king who saved his country from grave peril.

During the time of Egyptian weakness preceding the reign of Ramses III the Libyans had infiltrated the fertile region of the Delta and formed an ever-increasing menace to the internal security of the country. Their mere presence was a continual threat, because in case of an invasion, they could be expected to make common cause with their compatriots living beyond the western border of Egypt. In the fifth year of his reign Ramses III went to war against the Libyans, and in a bloody battle defeated them decisively. He claims to have slain 12,535 of them and to have taken many thousands of captives.

**The Peoples of the Sea.**—After averting the danger from the west, Ramses had to meet another, even greater, danger from the northeast. The so-called Peoples of the Sea, from Crete, Greece, the Aegean Islands, and perhaps from Sardinia and Sicily, moved eastward. They overran and destroyed coastal cities of Asia Minor, such as Troy, then the Hittite kingdom, as well as a number of states in northern Syria, such as Ugarit, and marched down the coast of Phoenicia and Palestine in an effort to invade the greatest civilized country of their time, the fertile Nile valley. Among them were the Tjekker and the Philistines, the latter coming in ox-drawn carts with their families. Both tribes settled on the coast of Palestine after the migration of the Peoples of the Sea had ended. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Ramses III met the enemy forces at the Palestinian border, in his eighth a serious defeat upon the would-be invaders, and destroyed their navy when it attempted a landing in one of the channels of the Nile. Although Ramses was thus able to save Egypt from invasion, he was not strong enough to drive the Tjekker and Philistines out of Palestine. Settling down, they controlled the rich coastal region for many centuries. In this they were probably assisted by certain Philistine tribes that had arrived prior to the movement of the Peoples of the Sea, which brought strong contingents of racially related peoples into the country.

In Medinet Habu, a temple built by Ramses III in western Thebes and today the best preserved of all pre-Hellenistic Egyptian temples, the king depicted his battles in monumental reliefs. These pictures are of great value, for they show the features of the different peoples with whom Ramses fought. The Philistines appear in their typical feather helmets, by which they can always be recognized. There are also other Peoples of the Sea, the Sherden (probably Sardinians), the Siculi (Sicilians), the Dardanians from western Asia Minor, the Achaeans from the Aegean Islands, and other peoples, all with their typical helmets or other characteristic marks. These reliefs, depicting the warfare of that time on land and sea, thus form important illustrative source material for a correct understanding of the racial movements that took place in the lands of the eastern

Mediterranean during the period of the judges of Israel, but movements that did not affect the people of Israel themselves.

The Israelites lived in the hinterland of Palestine, and the main thoroughfares along the coast witnessed the decisive battles of the time. However, in the latter times of the judges the Philistines consolidated their hold on the coastal regions of Palestine and threatened the national existence of Israel. They extended their influence over the mountainous part of Palestine and subjugated Israel for decades. The struggle with the Philistines proved to be a long one, and the fight for liberty begun under Samson, continued under Samuel and Saul, and was completed only in the reign of David.

Ramses III not only succeeded in saving Egypt from external dangers but also promoted its internal security. One text remarks with satisfaction that once more “women could walk wherever they wanted without molestation.” From the close of his reign comes the great Papyrus Harris, now in the British Museum, which contains a summary of all the gifts the king had made to the various temples and gods, and of the property the temples had possessed before him. This valuable document is a major source of information on Egypt’s secular and ecclesiastical economy during that time. However, two main problems are posed by this manuscript: (1) Were the gifts of the king added to former holdings, or did they consist of a royal confirmation of old possessions? (2) In what relationship do these gifts and holdings stand to the economy of all Egypt? Hence, this document has been interpreted differently by various scholars. Breasted thinks that about 8 per cent of the population of Egypt stood in the service of the temple, and that about 15 per cent of the land was ecclesiastical property. Schaedel, however, holds that the figures should be 20 per cent and 30 per cent respectively. Whatever figures are right, it is evident that ecclesiastical leaders played an important role in Egypt at that time, and that no king had a chance of survival unless he supported them.

**Egypt in Decline.**—Ramses III apparently fell victim to a harem conspiracy, in which some of his concubines and at least one of his sons were involved, besides high state officials. Some of the judicial records dealing with the investigation of this case and the sentences imposed are available today. These documents throw interesting light on the judicial system of ancient Egypt, and indirectly on the case of the two courtiers who shared Joseph’s prison during the time their cases were being investigated (see Gen. 40:1–3).

Ramses III was followed by a number of weak kings, every one of whom bore the name Ramses, numbered now as Ramses IV to XI (1167–1085 B.C.). During the period of their reign Egypt experienced a steady decline of royal power and an equivalent increase of priestly influence. The priesthood of Amen, forming the most influential and powerful portion of Egypt’s ecclesiastical citizenry, finally overthrew the dynasty and made its own high priest king.

With the deterioration of political and economic strength Egypt’s internal troubles became acute. Ramses III was the last king who held Beth-shan in the Valley of Esdraelon, which had been an Egyptian city for centuries. Although the base of a statue of Ramses VI was found during the excavation of Megiddo, there is not the slightest evidence that this king had any influence in Palestine. This bronze statuette may have been sent to Palestine as a gift. The last royal name mentioned in the inscriptions at the copper mines at Sinai is that of Ramses IV, showing that after him no more expeditions were sent to Sinai for mining purposes.

The loss of the last foreign holdings caused an increase of poverty and insecurity and caused inflation. A sack of barley rose in price from 2 to 8 deben. Spelt (a cheaper kind of wheat) rose from 1 to 4 deben during the reign of the kings Ramses VII to X, and later leveled off at 2 deben. As the cost of living rose the revenue of the government fell off, with the result that it could not pay its officers and workers. This in turn resulted in strikes of government workers, the first recorded strikes in history. Several serious situations thus arose in places where many men were occupied on public works, for example, in western Thebes, where the upkeep of the tremendous royal necropolis with all its temples required a great force.

Another cause of the difficult situation was widespread official corruption. As an example, the case of an official may be cited, who was responsible for the shipment of grain from Lower Egypt to the temple of Khnum at Elephantine in Upper Egypt. When he was later tried for embezzlement it was found that of 6,300 sacks of grain received in the course of 9 years he had delivered only 576 sacks, or about 9 per cent of the total. The other 91 per cent of the grain had been embezzled by him, in collaboration with certain of the scribes, controllers, and cultivators attached to Khnum's temple. The records of that time tell also of bands of roving and plundering soldiers who were a scourge on the population, and of continual cases of tomb robberies. Since the population suffered under the economic stress of the times, while everyone knew that untold treasures in gold and silver were hidden in the royal tombs in the valleys of the kings and queens in western Thebes, it is not surprising to read of attempts made to obtain some of those treasures. The available records of investigations of tomb robberies leave the impression that even officials were involved in the thefts. Such robberies occurred so frequently later on that every royal tomb, with the exception of that of Tutankhamen, was eventually looted. Little if anything remained for the archeologist.

By the close of the Twentieth Dynasty (1085 B.C.) Egypt had reached one of the lowest points in its long and checkered history. Nothing of its former wealth and glory was left. Its envoys were despised in foreign lands, as the Wenamon story and a satirical letter reveal—as will be seen in connection with the history of the judges of Israel. Egypt had become a “bruised reed,” as an Assyrian officer mockingly called it several centuries later, in Hezekiah's time (2 Kings 18:21). This weakness, which began in the time of the judges, proved a blessing to the young nation of Israel, which was thus able to develop without being hindered by a strong neighboring power.

### **III. The Kingdom of Mitanni (c. 1600—c. 1350 B.C.)**

The greatest rival of Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty was the kingdom of Mitanni in northern Mesopotamia. Although recent discoveries have thrown some light on the history of this obscure power, little is known of it. The site of its ancient capital, Washshukani, known from Hittite records, has not yet been discovered, although it is generally believed to have been in the upper Chabur region near *Tell Halâf*.

The ancient native population of the whole region consisted of Aramaeans speaking the Aramaic language, but the rulers were Hurrians, who had taken possession of the country in the 17th century B.C. “Hurrian” is the ethnic name of an Aryan branch of the great Indo-European family of nations, whereas Mitanni is the name of the state over which the Hurrians ruled. The names of their kings and high officials resemble Aryan names, and those of their gods are found in the Indian Veda: Mithras, Varuna, Indra, and Nasatya.

Although the beginning of the kingdom of Mitanni is obscure, it is known that Hurrians occupied this region about the 17th century, for the Hittites, under their king, Murshilish, fought the Hurrians on their return to Anatolia after the conquest and destruction of Babylon. However, it is not until the 15th century B.C. that the names of their kings appear in written source material, particularly in the Egyptian records of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, with whom these kings had several encounters. However, toward the end of the 15th century friendly relations between the royal houses of Egypt and Mitanni were established, so that for several successive generations Egyptian kings took Mitanni princesses as wives. Artatama I of Mitanni gave his daughter to Thutmose IV; Shutarna II, his daughter Gilukhepa to Amenhotep III; and Tushratta, his daughter Tadu-khepa to Amenhotep IV. This is the time (14th century B.C.) of the Amarna Letters, which reveal, among other things, the friendly relations between Egypt and the Hurrians of Mitanni.

The reason for this change from hostility to friendship may have been the emergence of a new power in the northwest, the Hittites. As the Hittites gradually extended their influence over all eastern Asia Minor, and attempted to make their influence felt in Syria and northern Mesopotamia—at that time either Egyptian or Mitanni territory—the two former enemies became friends out of necessity. But their joint endeavors were not strong enough to hold the vigorous Hittites in check for long, and under the weak reign of Pharaoh Ikhnaton it was apparent in Syria that Egypt no longer played a decisive role in Asiatic affairs. Hence, about 1365 B.C. Mattiwaza of Mitanni concluded a treaty of friendship with Shubbiluliuma, the powerful Hittite king of that time, and recognized his sovereign influence in Syria. The northeastern Hurrians had in the meantime founded a separate kingdom under the name of Hurri. The names of two of its kings (a son and grandson of Shutarna of Mitanni) are known, both from the 14th century B.C.

After the middle of the 14th century all ancient sources are silent concerning the Mitanni kingdom, but the Assyrian records from about 1325 to 1250 B.C. speak of a kingdom of Hanigalbat lying in the same region as the former Mitanni. Since the kings of Hanigalbat had Aryan names like those of the former Mitanni kingdom, it seems that Hanigalbat was the successor of Mitanni. It was, however, a country with little power and influence, and small in extent, inasmuch as its western regions had become part of the Hittite empire, and its eastern ones part of Assyria. This kingdom probably came to its end in the 13th century and broke up into several small city states, which were later absorbed by Assyria during its period of expansion.

Although the history of the Hurrian kingdom of northern Mesopotamia is still rather obscure, the above sketch is given because the Hurrians played an important role in the movements of races in the second millennium B.C. They extended their influence over much of the ancient world, reaching even to southern Palestine, as we know from Egyptian records. In the Bible the Hurrians are called Horims or Horites (see Gen. 14:6; 36:20, 21; Deut. 2:12, 22). The importance of the Hurrians in Palestine can be seen from the fact that at certain periods the Egyptians called the whole land *Kharu*. It is possible that King Chushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia, who oppressed Israel for eight years soon after Joshua's death and was finally defeated by Caleb's younger brother Othniel (Judges 3:8–10), was one of the Mitanni kings of the 14th century B.C. Because of the similarity of sound, Tushratta has been identified with Chushan-rishathaim, but it is thought the

latter may have been one of the kings of the period after 1365 B.C. for which no records have been found so far.

#### **IV. The Hittite Empire From c. 1400—c. 1200 B.C.**

The old Hittite kingdom, which early in its history destroyed Babylon, has been discussed in Vol. I (pp. 129, 137, 138). Hittite history before 1400 B.C. is not well known, and even the succession of kings is a matter of discussion among scholars. However, after 1400 B.C. the Hittite kingdom enters into the full light of history.

Its capital, Khattushash, lay inside the great bend of the Halys in Asia Minor, near the village of Boghazköy, which is not far from the present Turkish capital, Ankara. Being an Indo-European people, the Hittites were racially related to the Hurrians, from whom they took much of their religion, as well as products of the Mesopotamian civilization and culture that the Hurrians had accepted from the Babylonians and Assyrians. In this way they took over the Babylonian cuneiform script, certain forms of art, literary products, such as epics and myths, and even gods and religious concepts. However, they by no means lost their own peculiar cultural values, such as their hieroglyphic script, which has only recently been deciphered.

The Hittites were a hardy and semibarbaric nation whose products of art did not reach to the high level the Egyptians had attained, nor did they build temples like some of the other nations, but their laws show that they were much more kindhearted and humane than most of the other ancient nations.

**Rise of Hittite Power.**—The first great king of the Hittites recognizable in history is Shubbiluliuma, who reigned from c. 1375 to c. 1335 B.C. A great catastrophe of a somewhat obscure nature had struck the nation a little before his accession to the throne. Although the records of this catastrophe are not clear, it seems that some subject nations of eastern Asia Minor had risen against their lords and destroyed the Hittite capital Khattushash. After Shubbiluliuma gained the throne, his first care was to rebuild the capital and to restore order in the kingdom. This was done through a number of campaigns. When the Hittite king once more was master over the different peoples of eastern Asia Minor, he turned against the rival kingdom of Mitanni. His first campaign seems to have been unsuccessful, because the Mitanni king Tushratta says in one of his letters to the Egyptian Pharaoh that he had gained a victory over the Hittites, but Shubbiluliuma must have had some success, as can be learned from another letter in the Amarna collection written by Rib-Addi of Byblos. Shubbiluliuma's second Syrian campaign was a complete success. He not only conquered the capital of the Mitanni kingdom but penetrated southern Syria to the Lebanon. When domestic troubles broke out in the family of Tushratta, with the result that he was killed, Shubbiluliuma placed Tushratta's son Mattiwaza, who had taken refuge with him, on the throne, and gave him his daughter as wife—thus binding the two royal houses together.

As already mentioned in the discussion of Egyptian history, it was at this time, when the Hittite king besieged the city of Carchemish on the Euphrates, that a request reached him from Tutankhamen's widow to send her one of his sons to become her husband and king of Egypt. The prince sent in response to this request was waylaid and murdered before reaching the country of the Nile. Upon receipt of the news of this crime Shubbiluliuma conducted a successful campaign against the Egyptians but was forced to retreat without being able to take advantage of his victory because of an outbreak of the plague, which ravaged the Hittite country for 20 years.

Four of Shubbiluliuma's sons became kings, two of them during their father's lifetime—one over Aleppo, another over Carchemish. A third son, Arnuwanda III, succeeded his father on the throne over the Hittite empire; and after his death, a younger brother, Murshilish II, gained the throne. A considerable number of contemporary documents provide ample information covering the reign of the last-mentioned king. He practically had to rebuild his father's empire because a number of revolts had broken out upon his father's death, and again when his brother Arnuwanda died. His life story is therefore filled with military campaigns against various peoples of Asia Minor, Syria, and Egyptian garrison forces.

The next king, Mutallu, also experienced a serious rebellion by a subject people, the Gashga, who succeeded in conquering and destroying the Hittite capital city of Khattushash, forcing the Hittite king to establish a temporary capital elsewhere. When, for some reason, the local kingdom of Amurru in northern Syria wanted to break its ties with the Hittites in favor of Egypt, to which it formerly belonged, Mutallu interfered, and with his allies forced Amurru to remain apart from the Egyptian Empire. It was at this moment that he met the Egyptian king Ramses II in the battle of Kadesh on the Orontes. Ramses had come to northern Syria to claim his old rights. The famous battle at Kadesh has already been described in connection with the history of the reign of Ramses II. Although Ramses II claimed to have won a victory, the battle ended in a draw, by which the Hittites gained some advantages. This conclusion is reached from the fact that after the battle of Kadesh the Hittites occupied Syrian territory that had not formerly been under their suzerainty.

**Friendship With Egypt.**—Urhi-Teshub, the next Hittite king, reigned uneventfully for seven years, when he was deposed and banished by his uncle, who made himself king as Hattushilish III. Relations with Egypt were still tense during the first years of his reign, as we know from a letter the Hittite king sent to the Babylonian king Kadashman-Turgu, in which he finds fault with Babylon for being too friendly toward Egypt. Later, however, he sought the friendship of Egypt and concluded a treaty with Ramses II in the latter's 21st year. This inaugurated a period of close cooperation between the two countries, strengthened by the marriage of Ramses II to Hattushilish's daughter 13 years later. The Hittites may have regarded the restlessness among the Aegean peoples as the harbinger of coming evil, and therefore desired friendly relations with their own eastern and southern neighbors—the Kassite rulers in Babylon and the Egyptians. These precautions were fruitless, however, since neither Egypt nor the Kassites of Babylon were strong enough to prevent the Hittites from falling prey to the irresistible advance of the Sea Peoples through Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine.

The next three Hittite kings, Tuthaliya IV, Arnuwanda IV, and his successor, were comparatively weak rulers. Very few documents have survived to throw light on their reigns. One treaty with the vassal kingdom of Amurru in Syria provides for an embargo on Assyrian goods and prohibits Assyrian merchants from passing through their land. This shows that Assyria was now in the ascendancy and was considered an enemy. Merneptah of Egypt aided the Hittites during a severe famine in the reign of Tuthaliya IV by shipments of grain, but the power of the Hittites was now a thing of the past, and its downfall could not be delayed longer.

**Fall of the Hittite Empire.**—About 1200 B.C. a great catastrophe brought the Hittite empire to a sudden end. This is attested by the sudden cessation of all Hittite

documentary material at that time, and by the Egyptian statement that “Hatti was wasted.” No power proved able to resist the Peoples of the Sea, who now poured through the countries of the north like a torrent. Archeological evidence agrees with these observations, showing that the cities of Anatolia were burned at this time after being overrun by enemies.

Hittite culture and political influence completely disappeared from Asia Minor with the extinction of the Hittite empire, though the previously subject city states of northern Syria and Mesopotamia carried on the Hittite culture and tradition for several centuries, until they themselves were absorbed by the Assyrians in the 9th century. Cities like Hamath on the Orontes, Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Karatepe on the Ceyhan River show a well-balanced mixture of native Aramaic, or even Phoenician culture, along with that of the Hittites. These were the Hittite states with which Solomon carried on a flourishing trade (2 Chron. 1:17), and of whom the Syrians of Elisha’s time were afraid when they lifted the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 7:6, 7). These city states are called Hittite kingdoms not only in the Bible but in the Assyrian records of their time also. In fact, the whole of Syria became known as Hittite country in Assyrian parlance of the empire period. When the cities of northern Syria were conquered and destroyed and their populations deported by the Assyrians in the 9th and 8th centuries B.C., all knowledge of the culture, language and script of the Hittites completely died out, and has been resurrected only recently from its sleep of more than two and a half millenniums.

### **V. The Rise and Growth of the Sea Peoples (c. 1400—c. 1200 B.C.)**

The Peoples of the Sea mentioned in Egyptian sources of the times of Merneptah and Ramses III have been mentioned in connection with the history of those Egyptian kings and in the account of the destruction of the Hittite empire. However, our sources about these peoples are very limited, and consist only of legends preserved by Homer, of Egyptian references to them, some archeological evidence, and a few Bible statements.

In various Egyptian documents recovered by archeologists the name Peoples of the Sea appears as a collective name for the Lycians, Achaeans, Sardinians (Sherden), Sicilians (Siculi), Danaeans, Weshwesh, Teucrians (Tjekker), and Philistines (Peleshet).

Egypt had always had some connections with the peoples of Crete, the islands of the Aegean Sea, and the mainland of Greece, as is evident from the presence of Egyptian objects in those areas and of Aegean pottery in Egypt. Up to the time of Amenhotep III the pottery from Crete is found more frequently in Egypt than that of other Greek areas. Also, most of the Egyptian objects found in Europe up to this time appear on Crete. After Amenhotep III relations with Crete seem to have been interrupted, since Egyptian objects from that time on have been found in only two places in Crete, whereas they have come to light in seven places on the mainland of Greece and on other islands, showing that stronger connections were developing with those areas. The archeological evidence at Crete shows, furthermore, that the rich culture of Crete called by archeologists Minoan II ended with the destruction of the great palace at Cnossus, an event which must have taken place between 1400 and 1350 B.C. This destruction was followed by the more primitive culture of the invading peoples.

Homeric legends about the destruction or disappearance of the formidable sea power of Atlantis may refer to Crete, which fell to these unknown invaders, who destroyed its culture as well as the power by which it had dominated other Greek tribes. This event is also reflected in the legend about a Greek hero, Theseus, who liberated the Greeks from



subjection to Minos of Crete, in whose labyrinth lived the Minotaur. We shall probably never know precisely what happened, but it is clear that the subject nations of the Aegean banded together, and with their long ships fought against the galleys of Minos, which had for so long monopolized the lucrative trade with Egypt and other lands. The destruction of the Cretan fleet resulted in the invasion of the rich island and the destruction of its culture. From that time on, the trade of the central Mediterranean lay in the hands of the peoples of the Aegean Sea, particularly those of coastal Asia Minor and mainland Greece.

**Migration of the Sea Peoples.**—But the migration of peoples did not stop with the destruction and occupation of Crete. By the 13th century the western coasts of Asia Minor were overrun and permanently occupied by Greek-speaking peoples, and in the last years of Ramses II the Peoples of the Sea and the Libyans entered the western Delta and extended their settlements almost to the gates of Memphis and Heliopolis. Merneptah, the son of Ramses II, had to face a mass invasion of these people, but was able to defeat them and save Egypt from this western menace. It was in his time that the great invasion of central Anatolia by the Peoples of the Sea took place. This marked the end of the Hittite empire and the destruction of rich, north Syrian cities like Ugarit (*Râs Shamrah*). Cyprus was also occupied by these western invaders. How the threat to Egypt was averted by Ramses III, who defeated these peoples in two decisive battles, has already been told (see p. 27).

**The Philistines.**—After these unsuccessful attempts to take possession of the Nile country, most of the invaders who escaped from the Egyptian massacres and were not captured seem to have returned to the west. The Tjekker and the Philistines, however, stayed in the country. The latter found some related tribes in the southern coastal region of Palestine who had evidently lived there for centuries (see Gen. 21:34; 26:1; Ex. 13:17, 18), and appreciably added to their military strength. As a result the Philistines, who had formerly been so weak that they sought treaties with Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 21:22–32; 26:26–33), and had been so unimportant that their names never appear in the records of Egypt prior to the 12th century, now became the gravest menace of the Israelites, who occupied the mountainous hinterland of Palestine.

That the Philistines apparently belonged to the peoples that invaded and destroyed the ancient culture of Crete, can be gathered from such texts as Jer. 47:4, where the Philistines are called “the remnant of the country of Caphtor [Crete],” or Amos 9:7, where God is said to have brought up “the Philistines from Caphtor.” Other texts (1 Sam. 30:14; Eze. 25:16; Zeph. 2:5) bring the Cretes and Philistines together as occupying the same territory. David seems to have had a bodyguard of Cherethites and Pelethites, that is, Cretans and Philistines (2 Sam. 15:18; 1 Kings 1:38, 44), similar to the custom of Ramses III, who made captured Philistines, Sardinians, and other Peoples of the Sea soldiers in his army. These foreign mercenaries, with 600 Philistines from Gath (2 Sam. 15:18), were practically the only soldiers who remained faithful to David at the time of Absalom’s rebellion.

## **VI. Israel Under the Judges (c. 1350—c. 1050 B.C.)**

The history of Assyria and Babylonia during the second half of the second millennium B.C. will be discussed in connection with their later history, since these nations played no important role in Western Asia during that time. However, after a

survey of the history of the nations who surrounded the people of Israel during the time of their conquest of Canaan, and the period when they were either ruled by judges or oppressed by enemy nations, it is in order now to study the history of the people of God with whom the Bible is mainly concerned. Whatever is known of the history of the lesser nations of Canaan during this period will be mentioned at appropriate points rather than in separate sections.

**Chronology of the Period.**—The time between the occupation of Canaan and the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy is known as the period of the judges. The chronology of this period hinges on the date of the death of Solomon. The working chronology adopted for this commentary (see pp. 124, 134, 143) puts Solomon's death in 931/30 B.C., that is, in the Hebrew year running from the fall of 931 to the fall of 930. Hence his beginning to build the Temple, in the spring month Zif of his fourth year (1 Kings 6:1), fell in 967/66, that is, in the spring of 966 (see Vol. 1, p. 191).

This was in the 480th year after the Exodus (1 Kings 6:1). Then Zif in the first year of the Exodus was 479 years earlier, in the spring of 1445 B.C., with the Exodus in the preceding month (Abib, 1445), and the crossing of the Jordan 40 years later (Joshua 5:6, 10) in 1405 B.C. Of the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1, 40 are to be deducted for the reign of Saul (Acts 13:21), 40 for the reign of David (1 Kings 2:11), and 4 from the reign of Solomon. These 84 years deducted from the 480 years leave the coronation of Saul in the 396th year from the Exodus, or the 356th from the invasion of Canaan, giving us the years 1405–1051/50 B.C. for the period from Joshua to Samuel.

Another chronological peg is provided by a statement made by the judge Jephthah at the beginning of his term of office, that Israel had then “dwelt in Heshbon and her towns ... three hundred years” (Judges 11:26). These 300 years go back to the conquest of this area under the leadership of Moses, during the last year of his life (see Deut. 2:26–37). This statement requires that the conquest under Joshua and the elders, together with the judgeships of Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Tola, and Jair, as well as the intervening periods of oppression, be included within the 300 years between the conquest and the time of Jephthah.

To fit these periods into the 300 years does not present great difficulties, since it is reasonable to assume that some judges ruled contemporaneously—one perhaps in Transjordan and another in western Palestine, or one in the north and another in the south. It is also possible that some tribes in one part of the country enjoyed rest and security at a time when other tribes were oppressed. This is, for example, indicated in the oppression by the Canaanite king Jabin of Hazor, which was terminated by the victory of Deborah and Barak over Sisera, captain of Jabin's army (Judges 4). In Deborah's song of victory several tribes were rebuked for having failed to assist their brethren in the struggle for liberation from the tyranny of the oppressor (Judges 5:16, 17). These tribes probably saw no need for risking life so long as they themselves enjoyed a peaceful existence, as was the case for 80 years after Ehud liberated them from the oppression of the Moabites and Amalekites (Judges 3:30).

From Jephthah to Saul's coronation was 57 years, according to chronological statements of the Bible. While Jephthah ruled over the eastern tribes, ending an 18-year oppression of the Ammonites, the Philistines began oppressing those in the west. They captured the ark in Eli's time, after it had been at Shiloh for 300 years (PP 514). During the time of this Philistine oppression Samson harassed the pagan oppressor and began “to

deliver Israel” (Judges 13:5). Samuel was probably also a contemporary of Samson, the latter operating in the southwest, the other in the mountains of central Palestine (1 Sam. 7:16, 17). Samuel was the last judge to guide Israel wisely. For a long time he was the sole leader of his people (PP 591) before the first king, Saul, was chosen.

The relatively fixed chronology of Egypt during this period, and several key dates in the Biblical chronology, permit an experimental reconstruction of the period of the judges that leads to the following chronological synchronisms:

## °TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

| ISRAEL<br>UNDER<br>THE<br>JUDGES*                                                  |               | EGYPTIAN KINGS*               |           | PHILISTINE KINGS |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
|                                                                                    |               | <i>eighteenth<br/>Dynasty</i> |           |                  |
| invasion of<br>Canaan                                                              | 1405          | menhotep III                  | 1412-1375 | attushilish II   |
| Israel under<br>Joshua and<br>the elders                                           | 1405-<br>1364 | Akhenaton,<br>Smenkhkare      |           | uthaliya III     |
|                                                                                    |               |                               | 1387-1366 | Amunwanda II     |
| Deborah's<br>liberation<br>from<br>Chushan<br>rishathaim's<br>8-year<br>oppression | 1356          | Akhenaten, Eye                | 1366-1353 | Hubbiluliuma     |
| rest of 40<br>years                                                                | 1356-<br>1316 | Amenhotep                     | 1353-1320 |                  |
|                                                                                    |               | <i>nineteenth<br/>Dynasty</i> |           |                  |
|                                                                                    |               | Amenhotep I                   | 1320-1319 | Amunwanda III    |
|                                                                                    |               | Akhenaten I                   | 1319-1299 | Attushilish II   |
| Samson's<br>liberation<br>from 18<br>years of<br>Moabite<br>oppression             | 1298          | Akhenaten in Palestine        | 1319      |                  |
|                                                                                    |               | Amenhotep II                  | 1299-1232 | Attallu          |
| 30 years' rest<br>of southern                                                      | 1298-<br>1218 | Battle at Kadesh              | 1295      |                  |

|                                                                                  |           |                                         |           |                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| and eastern tribes                                                               |           |                                         |           |                                   |
| Deborah and Barak's liberation after Jabin's 20 years of oppression in the north | 1258      |                                         |           | Yri-Teshub                        |
|                                                                                  |           |                                         |           | Attushilish III                   |
| rest in the north                                                                | 1258-1218 |                                         |           | last weak Hittite kings           |
| Joshua's liberation from 7-year Midianite oppression                             | 1211      | Merneptah and other weak kings          | 1232-1200 | end of Hittite kingdom about 1200 |
|                                                                                  |           | <i>twenty-first Dynasty</i>             |           |                                   |
| Joshua's rule                                                                    | 1211-1171 | Pharaohs III                            | 1198-1167 |                                   |
| Simeon's kingship over Shechem                                                   | 1171-1168 | War against Peoples of the Sea          | 1194-1191 |                                   |
| Goliath, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon                                            | 1168-1074 | Pharaohs IV-XI                          | 1167-1085 |                                   |
| beginning of Philistine oppression                                               | 1119      |                                         |           |                                   |
| Samson's exploits                                                                | 1101-1081 | <i>twenty-first Dynasty</i>             |           |                                   |
| Ark taken, Eli's death                                                           | 1099      |                                         |           |                                   |
| Battle at Ebenezer, Philistines defeated                                         | 1079      | High priests of Amen as kings of Egypt) |           |                                   |
| Samuel judge                                                                     | 1079-1050 |                                         | 1085-950  |                                   |

**The Peoples of Canaan and Their Culture.**—The earliest, aboriginal population of Palestine was non-Semitic, as is evident from the names of the oldest settlements, which are non-Semitic. Toward the end of the second millennium B.C. the Amorites invaded Canaan and for centuries formed its ruling class. The early Hittites, of whom only traces

are recognizable in the texts coming from the time of their later empire period, also settled in certain parts of Palestine, as did the Hurrians, especially in the south. Of the 11 peoples called Canaanites in Gen. 10:15–19, the Hittites and Amorites have already been mentioned. Six of the others lived in Syria and Phoenicia; namely, the Sidonians and the Zemarites on the coast; the Arkites, with their capital Irqata, of the Amarna Letters, north of Tripoli; the Sinites, whose capital Siannu, mentioned in Assyrian records, is still unidentified; the Arvadites, with their capital Arvad in northern Phoenicia; and the Hamathites in inland Syria. Of the remaining three Canaanite tribes, the Jebusites, Grigasites, and Hivites, nothing is known from extra-Biblical sources.

All these peoples, living in a country situated between the two great civilizations of antiquity—Egypt in the south and Mesopotamia in the north—were strongly influenced by the cultures of those countries. Although Palestine and Syria had lived under the political dominion of Egypt for centuries by the time of the Hebrew invasion, the cultural influences of Mesopotamia were stronger than those of Egypt. The reason for this strange phenomenon may lie in ethnic ties. Since all these peoples spoke Semitic languages closely related to those spoken in Babylonia and Assyria, they may have been more attached to the eastern culture than to that of their political overlords. Hence we find that the Babylonian language and script were used in all correspondence between the different city rulers, and between them and the Egyptian court. The clay tablet served them as writing material, as it did their eastern neighbors. That the art of writing was extensively practiced is evident from the fact that cuneiform texts have been found in various Palestinian excavations, such as Shechem, Taanach, *Tell el-Hesi*, and Gezer, and from the hundreds of Amarna Letters which, although they were discovered in Egypt, originally came from Palestine and Syria.

Also, a new, alphabetic script, probably invented in the mining region of Sinai toward the end of the patriarchal period (see Vol. I, pp. 106, 586), was beginning to be used more extensively in the period under discussion. Short inscriptions written in alphabetic script have been found at Lachish, Beth-shemesh, Shechem, and elsewhere. They suggest that the people of that time were eager to write and were using the new script, because of its obvious advantages over the difficult and cumbersome cuneiform or hieroglyphic scripts with their many hundreds of characters.

The excavation of Palestinian cities dating from the period before the Israelites entered the country shows that the population had attained a high level of craftsmanship, especially in the building of city rock tunnels. The Jebusites, for example, dug a vertical shaft inside the city of Jerusalem, to a depth on a level with the spring Gihon, which was some distance outside the city in the Kidron Valley. From the bottom of this shaft they dug a horizontal passage to the spring, through which they were able to secure water from the spring in a time of emergency without leaving the city.

A magnificent water tunnel was also excavated at Gezer, consisting of a gigantic staircase about 219 ft. long cut out of solid rock. This tunnel is 23 ft. high at the entrance and about 13 ft. wide, but diminishes greatly toward the end. The roof is barrel shaped, and follows the slope of the steps. It ends at a large spring 94 1/2 ft. underneath the rock surface, and 130 ft. below the present surface level. The toolmarks show that the work was done with flint tools, and the contents of the debris reveal that the tunnel fell into disuse not long after the Hebrew invasion. How the ancient citizens of Gezer knew that they would strike a powerful spring at the end of their tunnel is still a mystery.

These engineering feats, which demonstrate the high level of material culture of the Canaanites at the time of the Hebrew invasion, are examples of many Canaanite accomplishments recently come to light.

**The Religion and Cult Practices of the Canaanites.**—Though it is true that the pre-Israelite population of Palestine had already attained a high cultural level by the time of the conquest, their religious concepts and practices were most degrading. The excavation of Canaanite temples and sacred places has brought to light many cult objects of Canaanite origin. At Ras Shamrah, ancient Ugarit, many Canaanite texts of a mythological nature have been found. Written in an alphabetic cuneiform script, they have shed much light on the language, poetry, and religion of the Canaanites of the middle of the second millennium B.C. They constitute our main source of information on the religion of the land Israel invaded and conquered.

Palestine seems to have had a great number of open-air sanctuaries, called *bamoth*, “high places,” in the Bible. The Israelites were so attracted by these “high places” that they took them over and dedicated them to God, in spite of His explicit command that He be worshiped at one place only, the place where the sanctuary was situated (Deut. 12:5, 11). Various prophets denounced these pagan places of worship (Jer. 7:31; 19:13; 32:35; Hosea 4:12, 13, 15; Amos 2:8; 4:4, 5), but it was most difficult to wean the people away from them. Even some of the best kings—Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham, for example—did not destroy them (2 Kings 14:3, 4; 15:4, 34, 35).

One of the best-preserved high places excavated in Palestine was found at Gezer, about halfway between Jerusalem and the coast. It was an open place, without any traces of building activity. However, it contained several caves, of which some were filled with ash and bones, probably the remains of sacrifices, since the bones were of men, women, children, infants, cattle, sheep, goats, and deer. Two of the caves were connected by a narrow winding tunnel, so that one of them could be used as a sacred place where the inquiring worshiper might consult an oracle. Every whispered word spoken in the smaller cave can be heard clearly in the larger one. It is not impossible that a cult object, perhaps an idol, once stood in front of the hole in the wall that connected the two caves, and that the worshipers imagined they received answers to their prayers in this place. Similar oracle places are known to have existed in Greece and Mesopotamia. In the middle of the main cave was a large block of stone, on which lay the skeleton of an infant, perhaps the remains of the last child sacrificed in this place.

Aboveground a row of 10 stone pillars was found. The tallest of these pillars is almost 11 ft. high, the shortest, 5 1/2 ft. In Hebrew such a stone pillar is called *maṣṣebah*, “image” (see Lev. 26:1; Deut. 16:22; Micah 5:13), more correctly, “pillar” (RSV). It is not certain whether these pillars were connected with sun worship, or whether they were symbols of fertility representative of the “sacred” *phallus erectus*. Several altars were also connected with the high place, and on the rock floor were many cup-shaped holes probably used for the reception of libations, or “drink offerings.”

Another well-preserved high place has been found on one of the mountains near Petra, the capital of the Edomites. Although this sacred place is of a much later date (1st century B.C.), it probably differed little from similar places of earlier times. A great altar was cut out of the virgin rock. A stairway of six steps leads up to its fire hearth. In front of the altar is a great rectangular court, with an elevated platform in the middle, where the

slaughtering of the sacrifice took place. A nearly square water tank has been hewn out of the rock, for use in connection with ablution rituals. This high place also has characteristic cups for pouring out libation offerings, and nearby there are obelisk-shaped standing pillars without which a high place apparently would have been incomplete.

Canaanite temples have also been excavated in Palestinian cities, such as Megiddo and Beth-shan. These sacred structures usually contain two rooms; the inner with a raised platform on which the cult image originally had stood served as the main sanctuary. However, the Canaanite cult was not limited to temples and high places. Numerous small stone altars found in Palestine show that the people had private shrines where sacrifices were offered. These stone altars were usually hewn out of one block of stone. The hearth was on the upper part, with four horns at the corners. Cult images have been found in great numbers in every Palestinian excavation. Most of these are little figurines representing a nude goddess with the sex features accentuated, showing that they were connected with the fertility cult, around which much of the Canaanite worship centered.

**Canaanite Deities.**—At the head of the Canaanite pantheon stood El, called “the father of years,” also “the father of men,” who was symbolized by a bull. In spite of his being the highest titular god, he was thought to be old and tired, and hence weak and feeble. According to a later Phoenician scholar, Philo of Byblos, El had three wives, Astarte, Asherah, and Baaltis (probably Anath), who were at the same time his sisters. Also in the Ugaritic texts Asherah is attested as El’s wife.

As patron of the sea Asherah is commonly called “Asherah of the Sea,” but also “creatress of the gods,” and “Holiness,” in both Canaan and Egypt. She was usually represented in pictures and on reliefs as a beautiful nude prostitute standing on a lion and holding a lily in one hand and a serpent in the other. She seems to have been worshiped under the symbol of a tree trunk, “groves” in the KJV (2 Kings 17:10). She found ready acceptance among the Israelites, who seem to have worshiped cult symbols dedicated to Asherah almost continuously during the pre-exilic period, for they were in a deplorable state of apostasy most of the time.

Another important Canaanite goddess was Astarte, Heb. *‘Ashtoreth*, “the great goddess who conceives but does not bear.” She is depicted as a nude woman astride a galloping horse, brandishing shield and lance in her hands. The Phoenicians attributed to her two sons, named according to Philo of Byblos, Pothos, “sexual desire,” and Eros, “sexual love.” Astarte plaques of a crude form are numerous in Palestinian sites excavated, but it is significant that they have not been discovered in any early Israelite level. This is true of the excavations carried on at Bethel, Gibeah, *Tell en-Naṣbeh*, and Shiloh, showing that the early Israelites shunned the idols of the Canaanites.

Anath, the third major goddess of the Canaanites, was the most immoral and bloodthirsty of all deities. Her rape by her brother Baal formed a standing theme in Canaanite mythology, finding entrance even into the literature of the Egyptians. Nevertheless, she is always called “the virgin,” a curious comment on the debased Canaanite concept of virginity. Her thirst for blood was insatiable, and her warlike exploits are described in a number of texts. It is claimed that she smote the peoples of the east and the west, that she lopped off heads like sheaves, and hands so that they flew around like locusts. She is then described as binding the heads to her back, the hands to her girdle, exulting while plunging knee deep into the blood of knights, and hip deep into the gore of heroes. In doing this she found so much delight that her liver swelled with

laughter. Moreover, she enjoyed killing not only human beings but also gods. For example, the death of the god Mot is attributed to her. He was cleft by her with a sword, winnowed with a fan, burned in the fire, ground up in a hand mill, and finally sown in the fields.

Baal, although not the chief god, played a most important role in the Canaanite pantheon. He was considered to be the son of El, the chief god, and a brother of Anath. Being held responsible for lightning, thunder, and rain, he was thought to bring fertility to the land of Canaan, which was entirely dependent on rain for agricultural purposes. At the beginning of the dry season, his devotees supposed, Baal was murdered by the evil god Mot, and the annual feast of his resurrection, probably at the time of the first rain, was an occasion of great rejoicing and festivity. Baal is the chief figure of all the mythological poetry of Ugarit, in fact, of all religious literature. When, in Elijah's time, Israel had turned to Baal worship, his impotence was clearly demonstrated by the withholding of rain for three years. God designed His people to learn that the introduction of Baal worship would not increase the fertility of their land, but would actually bring famine. At Mt. Carmel, Elijah gave a conclusive demonstration that Baal was helpless as a rain god, indeed, that he was nonexistent.

Besides the gods named, there was a host of other deities with minor functions, but space makes it impossible to give more than a cursory survey of the complex religion of the Canaanites, the various exploits of the Canaanite gods, their lust for blood, their vices and immoral acts. However, it may suffice to say that the Canaanite religion was simply a reflection of the morals of the people. A people cannot stand on a higher moral level than their gods. If the gods commit incest, adultery, and fornication, if they exult in bloodshed and senseless murders, their worshipers will not act differently. It is therefore not astonishing to learn that ritual prostitution of both sexes was practiced in the temples, that in these "sacred" houses homosexuals formed recognized guilds, and that on feast days the most immoral orgies imaginable were held in the temples and high places. We also find that infants were sacrificed on altars or buried alive to appease an angry god, that snake worship was widespread, and that the Canaanites wounded and mutilated themselves in times of grief and mourning, a practice that was prohibited among the Israelites (Lev. 19:28; Deut. 14:1).

**Effects of Canaanite Religion.**—How their religious thinking influenced the Canaanites' way of life is well illustrated by the story of Naboth's death at the hand of Jezebel for refusing to give up his vineyard to Ahab (1 Kings 21). When Ahab's request was rejected by Naboth, the king was deeply offended and grieved, but he saw no reason for doing anything against Naboth. His wife, however, a Phoenician princess and passionate worshiper of Canaanite gods and goddesses like Baal and Asherah, immediately proposed a way to have Naboth killed and his property impounded.

In Ugaritic literature a similar story is found. The goddess Anath desired to possess a beautiful bow belonging to Aqhat. She requested him to give the bow to her in return for gold and silver. When Aqhat refused to part with his bow and advised her to have one made for herself, she tried to change his mind by promising him eternal life. This being to no avail, she plotted his destruction and secured possession of the coveted bow. We do not know whether Jezebel knew this story, and whether she was influenced by it or not, but it is not strange that a woman who was educated in an environment where such



stories were told about the gods would have no scruples about applying similar means to achieve her purpose.

Because of the depravity of the Canaanites, Israel was commanded to destroy them. An understanding of the religion and immorality connected with Canaanite worship explains God's severity toward the people who practiced it.

**The Crossing of the Jordan River.**—Bible critics declare that the story of Israel's crossing the Jordan is an incredible myth, that it would be utterly impossible that the river should cease its flow for the space of time required for so vast a multitude to pass over. The fact is, history records at least two instances during the past 700 years when the Jordan suddenly ceased flowing and many miles of the river bed remained dry for a number of hours. As the result of an earthquake, on the night preceding December 8, A.D. 1267, a large section of the west bank opposite Damieh fell into the river, completely damming its flow for 16 hours. This is the very location where, according to the Bible record, "the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap" (see on Joshua 3:16). Near *Tell ed-Dâmiyeh*, the Biblical city of Adam, not far from where the Jabbok flows into the Jordan, the river valley narrows into a gorge that makes such an occurrence as the complete blocking of the river a comparatively simple matter.

On July 11, 1927, the river ran dry again. A landslide near the ford at *Tell ed-Dâmiyeh*, caused by a severe earthquake, carried away part of the west bank of the river, thus blocking its flow for 21 hours and flooding much of the plain around *Tell ed-Dâmiyeh*. Eventually, these waters forced their way back into the usual channel. For historical data on these two instances see John Garstang and J. B. E. Garstang, *The Story of Jericho* [1940], p. 136, 137; D. H. Kallner-Amiram, *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. I [1950-1951], pp. 229, 236.

In the light of this evidence critics, reversing themselves, will no doubt now wish to dismiss the Jordan miracle of Joshua's day as simply a natural phenomenon, the result of an earthquake. Any explanation, no matter how incredible, seems better to some men than admitting that God performs miracles. We would ask: How could Joshua know a day ahead that an earthquake would block the river 20 mi. upstream? Even more incredible, how could he know the exact moment of the earthquake, in order to direct the priests bearing the ark to march forward so that their feet would reach the riverbank just when the water ceased to flow (see Joshua 3)? Are these Bible critics able to produce earthquakes? Or can they even predict the hour or the day when one will occur and regulate its effects so as to accomplish their objectives? The answer is No. And this resounding No wipes out forever their foolish objections to the simple Bible statement that a miracle occurred. Whether or not God caused an earthquake upon this occasion, we know not; we do know that He shakes the earth and makes it tremble (Ps. 60:2; Isa. 2:19, 21) and that the elements fulfill His will (Ps. 148:8). But the very shaking of the earth, though described by men as an earthquake, is in this case of the Jordan truly a miracle.

**The Invasion of Canaan Under Joshua.**—Jericho was the first city that blocked the way of the invading Hebrews. The Jericho of Joshua's time has since the Middle Ages been identified with the mound *Tell es-Sultân*, which is situated close to modern Jericho and not far from the river Jordan. In excavating the ancient ruins of the city Prof. John Garstang found the remains of city walls that showed signs of destruction he attributed to

an earthquake. Various reasons led him to the conclusion that he had found the ruins of Joshua's Jericho. But further excavations, in the 1950's, under the direction of Dr. Kathleen M. Kenyon, yielded evidence that would assign those walls to an earlier century and uncovered no remains that could be assigned to Joshua's time except a portion of a house and some pottery in the tombs outside the city indicating burials there in the 14th century. Unfortunately, the top levels of that mound have been so badly destroyed, particularly by erosion, that the later remains have been virtually obliterated. It is questioned whether the site will ever provide archeological evidence that will shed light on the Bible story of the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6).

From the Bible, however, we know that this city, the first one conquered by the Israelites, fell as the result of a divine act of judgment that the Canaanites had brought upon themselves. The strongly fortified city was suddenly destroyed and its contents and population—with the exception of Rahab and her family—were given to the flames.

The next city taken after the fall of Jericho was the little town of Ai (Joshua 8).

Archeologists have identified Ai with the ruins of *et-Tell*, excavated during three seasons under Mme. Judith Marquet-Krause, from 1933 to 1935. However, this identification cannot be correct, since the city uncovered was one of the largest of ancient Palestine, whereas the Bible speaks of Ai as a place much smaller than Jericho (see Joshua 7:3).

Furthermore, excavation has shown that *et-Tell* was destroyed several centuries before the Israelite conquest, and had been in ruins for hundreds of years when Jericho fell to the Israelites. However, as Vincent has proposed, it is possible that the city ruins served as a habitation for a small population in the time of Joshua, because the name Ai means "ruin." This view may be correct, or the real location of the town may yet be discovered.

**The Conquest of Central Canaan.**—With the fall of Jericho and Ai the central part of Canaan lay open before the invaders. When the Israelites proceeded inland they found to their consternation that they had been deceived by the inhabitants of Gibeon and other cities, with whom they had but a short time previously concluded an alliance of mutual assistance, not knowing that their new allies were inhabitants of Canaan. Hence, the Israelites could not take their cities, and were even obliged to assist them when they were attacked by neighboring city kings who resented the Gibeonite alliance with Israel (Joshua 9).

To fulfill a command previously given by Moses, the Israelites went to Shechem, built an altar, and inscribed the law on a plastered stone monument (see Deut. 11:29–32; Deut. 27:1–8; Joshua 8:32–35). Half of the people stood on Mt. Ebal and the other half on Mt. Gerizim, while the blessings and curses prescribed by Moses were read to them. The Bible does not explain how it was possible for the Israelites to take possession of the region of Shechem, in the central part of the country. The impression, however, is gained that no hostilities preceded their taking possession of this section of the land. Although the Bible is silent concerning events that led to the surrender of Shechem, an Amarna Letter (No. 289) written a few years later by the king of Jerusalem to Pharaoh probably contains information as to how the Israelites gained possession of the Shechem region. In this letter the king of Jerusalem complains that the Habiru (Hebrews) had become so strong that there was danger that he and other kings who still withstood them would have to surrender their own cities as Shechem had been surrendered. The significant passage reads, "To us the same thing will happen, after Labaja and the land of Sakmi [Shechem]

have given [all] to the Habiru [Hebrew].” There is therefore reason to conclude that the king of Shechem followed the example of the Gibeonites and surrendered without a fight.

In order to punish those cities that had voluntarily surrendered to the Israelites, the Amorite king of Jerusalem made an alliance with four other princes of southern Palestine and threatened to take Gibeon. Responding to an urgent Gibeonite plea for help, Joshua marched against the five kings and defeated their armies in the memorable battle of Azekah and Makkedah, for which the day was lengthened in response to Joshua’s prayer. The five kings fell into Joshua’s hands and were killed, and in the ensuing campaign a number of Canaanite cities in the south were taken. However, no attempt was made either to annihilate the defeated populations or to occupy their cities. On the contrary, the Israelites, after taking Canaanite cities, apparently returned them to their inhabitants, and retreated to their camp at Gilgal on the Jordan (Joshua 10).

Later, a campaign against a hostile alliance under the leadership of the king of Hazor, in the north, was undertaken. In the resulting battle of Merom (Lake Huleh) the Israelites were once more victorious. Although they destroyed Hazor completely and pursued their fleeing enemies, they made no attempt at permanent occupation of this part of the country, but left it to their defeated foes as they had the southland (Joshua 11).

The only other military campaigns carried out during the period of the conquest were those of Caleb against Hebron, of his brother Othniel against Debir (Joshua 14:6–15; Joshua 15:13–19; Judges 1:10–15), and of the tribes of Judah and Simeon against Jerusalem (Judges 1:3–8). However, many of the cities taken during the several campaigns were not occupied, as, for example, Jerusalem (see Judges 1:8); cf. v. 21 and 2 Sam. 5:6–9, Taanach (see Joshua 12:21; cf. Judges 1:27), Megiddo (see Joshua 12:21; cf. Judges 1:27), Gezer (see Joshua 12:12; cf. 1 Kings 9:16), and others. The Biblical records tell also that whole regions, such as Philistia, Phoenicia, and northern and southern Syria (Joshua 13:2–6), remained unoccupied.

**The Conquest of Canaan a Gradual Process.**—The conclusion derived from these different statements is that during the period of the conquest an attempt was made only to gain a foothold. Various local kings and coalitions were defeated, because they contested the right of the Hebrews to settle in western Canaan. However, no serious attempts seems to have been made by the Israelites to dislocate all the Canaanites from their cities and strongholds, although a few cities were definitely taken into possession at that time. Having spent the last 40 years in the desert as nomads, the Hebrews seem to have been satisfied to settle down as tent dwellers in Canaan. As long as they found pastures for their cattle and were not molested by the native inhabitants, they had no desire to live in fortified cities like the Canaanites. Though Joshua divided the country among the 12 tribes, this division was largely in anticipation of their occupying fully the respective areas. This can clearly be seen from a study of the lists given in Joshua 15 to 21, in which numerous cities are mentioned that were not possessed until centuries later. However, as the Hebrews became stronger, they made the Canaanites tributary (Judges 1:28) and eventually dispossessed them.

This process was gradual and took centuries, not being complete before the time of David and Solomon. It is possible that in Acts 13:19, Paul refers to this long period of conquest, from Joshua to Solomon. According to the earliest New Testament manuscripts, this text reads, “When he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years” (RSV),

meaning that it took them about 450 years before the whole land was actually taken into possession as an inheritance.

This picture of a gradual conquest of Canaan by the Hebrews, from piecing together all the Scriptural evidence, is supported by historical evidence, as can be learned from the Amarna Letters and other extra-Biblical sources of that period and the ensuing centuries. The Amarna Letters, all written during the first half of the 14th century B.C., give us a good picture of what happened during that time. Many of these letters originated in Palestine and testify vividly to the chaotic conditions existing in the country, according to Canaanite views.

Most instructive are the letters of Abdu-Kheba, the king of Jerusalem, who complained bitterly that the king of Egypt turned a deaf ear to his petitions for assistance, since the Habiru—probably the Hebrews (see on Gen. 10:21; Gen. 14:13)—gaining power in the country, while he and other local rulers of the land were fighting a losing battle against them. In one letter (No. 271) he wrote: “Let the king, my Lord, protect his land from the hand of the Habiru, and if not, then let the king, my Lord, send chariots to fetch us, lest our servants smite us.” Venting his chagrin over the fact that all his pleas had been unsuccessful, and that he had received neither weapons nor forces, he asked in all earnestness: “Why do you like the Habiru, and dislike the [faithful] governors?” (No. 286). He warned the Pharaoh in the same letter: The “Habiru plunder all the lands of the king. If there are archers [sent to assist him in his fight] in this year the lands of the king, my Lord, will remain [intact], but if there are [sent] no archers, the lands of the king, my Lord, will be lost.” He then added a few personal words to the scribe who would read the letter to the Pharaoh, asking him to present the matter in eloquent words to the king, since all the Palestinian lands of the Pharaoh were being lost.

These few quotations from the letters of Abdu-Kheba of Jerusalem, which could be multiplied many times, may suffice to show how the Canaanites themselves viewed the political conditions of their country during the time of the conquest and immediately after the period described in the book of Joshua. These letters reveal that many Canaanite princes, like those of Jerusalem, Gezer, Megiddo, Accho, Lachish, and others, were still in possession of their city states decades after the Hebrews had crossed the Jordan, but that they were in mortal fear that their days were numbered, and that the hated Habiru would take their thrones and possessions.

This picture agrees well with that gained from a study of the Biblical records. However, the names of the kings of the Amarna Letters are not the same as those mentioned in the Bible as rulers of the same cities. The king of Jerusalem is called Adoni-zedec in Joshua 10:1, but Abdu-Kheba in the Amarna Letters. Gezer’s king was Horam, according to Joshua 10:33, but Yapahu, according to the Amarna Letters, etc. This difference is easily accounted for if the time element is taken into consideration. The Canaanite kings mentioned in Joshua were defeated and killed by the Hebrews very soon after the invasion of the country began in 1405 B.C., whereas the kings mentioned in the Amarna Letters lived several years later, when the Hebrews had settled down in the country, and taken possession of several regions.

That some of the cities already mentioned, like Jerusalem, Gezer, Megiddo, and others, remained in the hand of native princes or Egyptian governors for centuries after the invasion of the Hebrews is attested not only in the Bible but also by other records. The important Canaanite fortress of Beth-shan, for example, is mentioned in Judges 1:27

as an unconquered city among those allotted to Manasseh by Joshua. This fact is corroborated by a notice in an Amarna Letter (No. 289) that the ruler of Gath had a garrison in Beth-shan, which means that the Israelites could not have possessed the city at that time. Toward the end of the 14th century Seti I of Egypt occupied the city, during his first Asiatic campaign, and erected victory steles in its temples. The presence of a similar stele of Ramses II and other Egyptian monuments of the 13th century B.C. excavated in recent years in the ruins of Beth-shan, prove, furthermore, that this city remained in Egyptian hands for a long time while the Hebrews occupied great parts of the land. The same is true of Megiddo and some other cities.

**The period of the Judges.**—This period of approximately 300 years (see pp. 127, 128) has been well characterized in the closing words of the book of Judges (ch. 21:25) as a time when “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” It was a period of alternating strength and weakness, politically and religiously. Having gained a foothold in the mountainous parts of Canaan, the people of Israel lived among the nations of the country. They established their sanctuary at Shiloh, where it remained for the greater part of the period. Most of the people lived like nomads in tents, and possessed few of the cities of the country. They were split up into tribal units and lacked national unity, which would have given them strength to withstand the many foes about them on all sides. The song of Deborah shows clearly that even in times of crisis and dire need some tribes remained aloof from their afflicted brethren, if they themselves were not affected by the oppressors.

Living thus among the Canaanites the Hebrews were brought into close contact with the religion of the country and its cult system. This seemed so attractive to many that great sections of the people accepted the Canaanite religion. The repeated periods of apostasy were always followed by periods of moral weakness, a situation that provided their more powerful enemies an opportunity to oppress them. In such periods of distress a strong political leader invariably arose and, driven by the Spirit of God, led His people—in whole or in part—through repentance back to God. Being usually a military leader at the same time, he will rallied one or more tribes around himself and liberated those that were oppressed. Each of these great leaders was called a “judge,” *shophet* in Hebrew.

This title included more power and authority than the English word suggests. They provided spiritual and political leadership, as well as judicial and military functions.

**The Early Judges.**—The first of these judges was Caleb’s younger brother Othniel, who liberated his nation from an eight-year oppression by the king Chushan-rishathaim of Mesopotamia, probably one of the Mitanni princes whose name has not yet been found outside the Bible—which is not at all strange in view of the fact that Mitanni source material is fragmentary. This period probably coincided with the last years of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt—the reigns of Smenkhkare, Tutankhamen, Eye, and Harmhab—when one king followed another in rapid succession.

It was probably about this time that Seti I, the first strong Pharaoh of Egypt in many years, invaded Palestine and crushed a Canaanite rebellion in the eastern part of the Valley of Esdraelon. That Canaanite cities were restored to Egyptian suzerainty did not affect the Israelites, who probably had not taken part in the rebellion, and possessed no cities the Egyptians could claim as their own. However, it is possible that Seti I had an encounter with some Hebrews of the northern tribe of Issachar, because he mentions on a poorly preserved monument found at Beth-shan, that the “Hebrews [‘Apiru] of mount

Jarmuth, with the Tayaru, were engaged in attacking the nomads of Ruhma.” Although Tayaru and Ruhma have not yet been identified, Jarmuth was one of the cities that Joshua allocated to the Levites in the territory of Issachar (Joshua 21:29). Seti I may thus have fought against some Hebrews of the tribe of Issachar, perhaps punishing them for attacking his allies, but the consequences for the Hebrews seem not to have been far reaching, or the Biblical records would have so indicated. However, it should never be forgotten that the book of Judges, reporting the history of Israel during almost 300 years, contains only a fragmentary record of all that happened during this long period.

Ehud, the second judge, liberated the southern tribes from an 80-year oppression by Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites by killing Moabite king Eglon. The 80 years of rest that the southern tribes enjoyed after Ehud’s heroic act coincided in part with the long reign of Ramses II of Egypt. This Pharaoh marched through Palestine along the coastal road, which was not in Israelite hands, to meet the Hittite king at Kadesh on the Orontes at the famous battle of Kadesh. Here, both Ramses and the Hittites claimed victory. Otherwise, Ramses seems not to have been seriously concerned about his Asiatic possessions. He kept garrisons in the Palestinian cities of Beth-shan and Megiddo, which lay in the Valley of Esdraelon, and probably also in certain strategic coastal cities. So long as the Israelites did not contest his possession of these cities, their settlement in the mountainous parts of Palestine was of no concern to the Pharaoh.

In several inscriptions Ramses II does mention that Hebrew (‘Apiru) slaves were engaged in his various building activities in Egypt; hence we conclude that Hebrews occasionally fell into the hands of his army commanders in Palestine. It is also possible that these Israelites were made slaves by the Canaanite king Jabin of Hazor, when for 20 years during the reign of Ramses II he oppressed the Hebrews. The heroic leadership of Deborah and Barak put an end to this unhappy situation.

**Gideon’s Judgeship.**—The 80 years of rest that had followed Ehud’s liberation of Israel from Moabite oppression in the south was broken by a Midianite oppression lasting 7 years. It was probably during this period also that Merneptah, son of Ramses II, made the raid into Palestine of which he boasts in the famous Israel Stele. Here he claims to have destroyed Israel, so that it had no “seed” left. His record obviously reflects the usual Egyptian tendency to exaggerate, and his claim to have utterly destroyed Israel is therefore not to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, it seems certain from his remarks that he encountered Israelites somewhere in Palestine upon this occasion.

Gideon, one of the outstanding judges, liberated his people from Midianite oppression, smiting a great foreign army with a small band of faithful, alert, and daring Israelite warriors. The story of his exploits and judgeship reveals also that intertribal strife flared up from time to time, and that the people had a strong desire for a unified leadership, expressed in their offer of kingship to Gideon—an honor he wisely declined.

Momentous events took place during the 40 years of Gideon’s peaceful judgeship. While Israel lived in the mountainous part of Palestine, the Peoples of the Sea moved along the coastal regions, during the reign of Ramses III, in their unsuccessful attempt to invade Egypt. Bloody battles on land and sea were fought during this time. The Egyptian victories over these invaders eventually turned the tide of this great migration of peoples and saved Egypt from one of the gravest perils that ever threatened its national existence, prior to the Assyrian invasion. Some of the defeated tribes again turned northward toward Asia Minor, whence they had come. Others, however, settled in fertile coastal regions of

Palestine. Among these were the Tjekker, in the vicinity of Dor, to the south of Mt. Carmel in the lovely Plain of Sharon, and the Philistines, who strengthened related tribes that had occupied some coastal cities of southern Palestine for a long time. The Israelites, who may have followed with great anxiety the momentous events that took place so close to their habitations, did not yet realize that these Philistines would soon become their most bitter foes.

When Gideon died after a judgeship of 40 years, his son Abimelech, with the help of the people of Shechem, usurped the rulership by killing all his brothers and proclaiming himself king. His rule, however, lasted only three years, and ended, as it had begun, in bloodshed. It is questionable whether his so-called kingdom extended its power beyond the vicinity of Shechem.

**The Later Judges.**—After him came the judges, Tola of Issachar (23 years) and Jair of Gilead (22 years). No important events are recorded of their time, a fact that seems to indicate that the 45 years of their rulership were rather uneventful.

After Jair's death two oppressions began at approximately the same time, one in the east by the Ammonites, which lasted for 18 years and was ended by the freebooter general, Jephthah, and one in the west of 40 years' duration by the Philistines. This Philistine oppression had more disastrous effects on the Hebrews than any of the previous times of distress.

As already noted, Jephthah made an important chronological statement (Judges 11:26) at the time he began his war of liberation against the Ammonites. He claims that by that time Israel had lived for 300 years in Heshbon and nearby cities which had been taken from the Amorite king Sihon under the leadership of Moses, and that the Ammonites had no right to contest Israel's possession of these cities. Jephthah's six years of judgeship must therefore have begun approximately 300 years after the end of the 40 years of desert sojourning, and hence about 1106 B.C.

While the eastern tribes were afflicted by the Ammonites those in the west endured the fury of the Philistines. Having consolidated their position in the coastal region of southern Palestine, where they were not molested by the extremely weak successors of Ramses III of Egypt, the Philistines turned their attention toward the hinterland and subjugated the neighboring Israelite tribes, especially Dan, Judah, and Simeon. This oppression began at the time when Eli was high priest, in whose household Samuel grew up as a boy. Soon after the beginning of this oppression Samson was born, and upon reaching manhood he harassed the oppressors of his nation for 20 years, until they took him captive. Endowed with supernatural strength, Samson caused the Philistines much harm. If his character had been disciplined, he might have become the liberator of Israel instead of dying an ignominious death. It may have been during those years that the Philistines won the battle at Aphek and captured the ark, killing also the two sons of the high priest Eli. This battle marked the lowest point in the history of Israel during the period of the judges, some 300 years after the tabernacle had been moved by Joshua to Shiloh (PP 514). Hence, the date for this event is about 1100 B.C.

After the disastrous battle of Aphek, Samuel began his work as spiritual leader of Israel. However, he was not immediately ready to wage a successful war against the Philistines, with their superior strength and war techniques. The oppression went on for another 20 years, but ended with the victory of the Israelites under Samuel at the battle of Ebenezer (1 Sam 7:13; PP 591). After Ebenezer, Samuel began a peaceful and highly

successful judgeship over Israel. This must have continued for about 30 years, until he bowed to the popular demand for a king. Samuel's sons, whom he had appointed as his successors, proved unfit as leaders and were rejected by the people.

With Saul's coronation as king of the entire nation the heroic age ended and a new era began. Prior to this time Israel's form of government was a theocracy, since the rulers were, presumably, appointed by God Himself and led by Him in the performance of their task. The new form of government began as a kingship with the ruler appointed by God, but soon developed into a hereditary monarchy. (The theocracy formally ended at the cross. DA 737.)

**Conditions During the Time of the Judges.**—The sorry conditions prevailing in Palestine during most of the time of the judges are also reflected in two literary documents from Egypt. These are so interesting and enlightening that a short description of their contents must be given here. The first is a satirical letter in which the journey of a *mahar* (an Egyptian envoy) through Syria and Palestine is described. The document comes from the second half of the 13th century B.C., and may have been contemporary with the Midianite oppression to which Gideon put an end.

The document describes the Palestinian roads as overgrown with cypresses, oaks, and cedars that "reached to the heavens," making travel difficult. It is stated that lions and leopards were numerous, a detail reminiscent of Samson's and David's experiences (Judges 14:5); (1 Sam. 17:34). Twice, thieves were encountered by the envoy. One night they stole his horse and clothing; on another occasion, his bow, sheath knife, and quiver. Also, he met Bedouins, of whom he says that "their hearts were not mild." Shuddering seized him and his hair stood up, while his soul "lay in his hand." However, not being himself a model of morality, he was caught in an escapade with a native girl at Joppa, and paid for his freedom only by selling his shirt of fine Egyptian linen.

This story, written in the form of a letter, whether true or fictitious, shows a remarkable knowledge of Palestinian topography and geography. Among many other well-known places it mentions Megiddo, Beth-shan, Accho, Shechem, Achshaph, and Sarepta. The story vividly illustrates the state of insecurity found in the country, where bad roads, robbers, and fierce-looking Bedouins were common. The description of the sad conditions met in Palestine reminds one of the experiences of the traveling Levite described in Judges 19, and the statement that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

The second story written in the first half of the 11th century B.C., at the height of the Philistine oppression after the ark was taken in the battle of Aphek, describes the journey of Wenamon, an Egyptian royal agent, to the Phoenician port city of Byblos to purchase cedarwood for the bark of Amen. Wenamon was sent by the priest-king, Heri-Hor of Thebes, and had been given a divine statue of the god Amen to protect him on the way and give him success in his mission. However, he was given only about 1 1/4 lb. of gold and 7 3/4 lb. of silver as money to purchase the desired cedarwood.

Wenamon left Egypt by ship, but when he reached the Palestinian port city of Dor, which was in the hands of the Tjekker, his gold and silver were stolen from him. He lodged a complaint with the local king, who refused to take any responsibility for the theft. After Wenamon had spent 9 days in Dor without finding either his stolen money or the thief, he stole about 7 1/2 lb. of silver himself, and then sailed for Byblos. However, the king of Byblos refused for 29 days to see him, and ordered him out of his city. On the



29th day after his arrival one of the king's pages had a visionary frenzy in the name of Amen and advised the king to grant Wenamon an interview. During this interview the king was extremely impolite, and asked for official credentials, telling Wenamon that for a previous shipment of cedars 250 lb. of silver had been paid. He made it clear that he was the master of the Lebanon, that he had no obligations toward Egypt, although he admitted that his people owed much to the culture of the Nile country.

The king of Byblos finally agreed to send a shipment of cedar to Egypt, and received a shipload of hides, papyrus scrolls, royal linen, gold, silver, etc., from Egypt in payment. The desired cedars were then cut and loaded, at which time the Phoenician king reminded Wenamon that a previous emissary had waited 17 years at Byblos and finally died there without getting his cedar. This was intended to point out to Wenamon that in Asia the prestige of Egypt had dwindled to nothing, and that its ambassadors no longer deserved the respect they had formerly been accustomed to receive.

When Wenamon was finally ready to leave the harbor of Byblos and set sail for Egypt, he found the Tjekker waiting with their ships to catch him and his load of cedarwood. He managed, however, to flee with his ship to Cyprus, where he barely escaped death by the hands of unfriendly natives. Unfortunately, the papyrus breaks off at this point of the narrative, and the rest of the story is therefore not known. It must, however, have had a happy ending, or the Egyptians would not have written and preserved it.

The story of Wenamon's mission is also instructive in that it highlights the chaotic political conditions of Palestine during the period of the judges. It shows that Egypt had lost all authority in Syria, and that an Egyptian envoy, whose arrival in former ages would have spread awe, could now be treated with contempt and disdain. We see, furthermore, that traveling was insecure, that people robbed and were robbed, and that no one was ever sure of his life.

## **VII. Egypt in Decline—Dynasties Twenty-one to Twenty-five (c. 1085—663 B.C.)**

The period under discussion shows Egypt at a very low level. Source material is scarce, and great gaps exist in our historical knowledge of this period. Also, Egyptian chronology for this period is uncertain, and depends on brief Bible references and Mesopotamian records. Since but a few of the Egyptian kings of this period are mentioned either in the Bible or in cuneiform sources, all dates preceding 663 B.C. are only approximately correct.

**Priest-Kings of the Twenty-first Dynasty (c. 1085—c. 950 B.C.).**—The Twentieth Dynasty, the weak Ramessides, ended about 1085 B.C. Tanis, in the eastern Delta, remained the political center. There, Smendes, whose origin is obscure, managed to become king, while Heri-Hor, the high priest of Amen, proclaimed himself king of Thebes, the earlier Upper Egyptian capital. The two rival kings had little political power, and the cultural level of Egypt fell rapidly. Although a grandson of Heri-Hor married a daughter of a king of Tanis, political unity was not achieved. The low ebb of Egypt's political power during this period is apparent from the treatment Wenamon received on his mission to Byblos, as already noted. One of the last kings of this dynasty was probably Solomon's Egyptian father-in-law (1 Kings 3:1).

**The Libyan Twenty-second and Twenty-third Dynasties (c. 950—c. 750 B.C.).**—It is unknown how the change from the Twenty-first to the Twenty-second Dynasty

occurred. The first king of the new dynasty, Sheshonk, the Biblical Shishak, was a Libyan army commander, and may have usurped the throne about 950 B.C. During the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Dynasties Libyans had been brought to Egypt in great numbers as prisoners of war. Many were then used as soldiers in the wars of Ramses III against the Peoples of the Sea. They served a number of kings as mercenaries. Some achieved honor and office, as, for instance, a family in Heracleopolis in the northern part of Upper Egypt, of whom several members served as officers in the army and others became governors of Egyptian cities and districts.

When Sheshonk came to the throne he was able to do away with the priestly dynasty at Thebes. Making one of his own sons high priest of Amen, he once more bound Thebes, the religious center, to the monarchy and achieved political unity in Egypt. The new king was engaged for several years in restoring orderly conditions in the country, and was successful to a certain degree.

As soon as he had a free hand in Egypt, Sheshonk turned his attention to Asia, where he made a determined effort to reconstitute the former empire. In this attempt he was favored by the death of King Solomon and the splitting up of the kingdom of Israel into two rival states. Sheshonk's Palestinian campaign in Rehoboam's fifth year is briefly described in 1 Kings 14:25, 26, and 2 Chron. 12:2–4. The Egyptians invested and spoiled many Judean and Israelite cities, among them the rich city of Jerusalem, whence Solomon's treasures were removed to Egypt. Sheshonk erected victory steles in Palestine. A fragment of one of these has been found at Megiddo, and a statute of the king was unearthed in the excavations of Byblos. When Sheshonk returned to Egypt he celebrated his triumph and had a list of conquered cities engraved on one of the walls of the great Amen temple at Karnak, where about 100 names of Palestinian cities have escaped the destructive forces of nature and man during the past three millenniums. Among these we discover such well-known names as Taanach, Megiddo, Beth-shan, Mahanaim, Gibeon, Beth-horon, Ajalon, and others. Although the campaign was a temporary success, Sheshonk was not able to hold Asia and permanently force his will upon it. The attempt to reorganize the Asian empire was a failure. Egypt lacked its former strength, and had definitely become a second-rate power.

The location of the tombs of the kings of the Twenty-first to Twenty-third Dynasty was unknown until Prof. P. Montet, the French excavator of the ruins of Tanis, discovered some royal tombs of the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties in that city. Some of the tombs were unspoiled. However, they did not contain such fabulous treasures as the tomb of Tutankhamen, although some beautiful gold and silver objects came to light in these tombs. A very fine golden bracelet from the tomb of Sheshonk's grandson bears an inscription stating that it had been given to him by his grandfather. It may actually have been made of gold and came into Sheshonk's possession from the treasures of King Solomon. The tomb of Sheshonk I has not yet been discovered. It may contain valuable information concerning his Asiatic campaign.

Sheshonk's successors of the Twenty-second as well as the Twenty-third Dynasty, probably all Libyans, were weak kings. The 15 kings of the 2 dynasties reigned for about 200 years (c. 950–750 B.C.), but Egypt was merely a shadow of its former self. It neither played a role in world politics nor produced any works of architecture or art comparable to the products of earlier ages. Its real condition is fittingly characterized a little later by Rab-shakeh, the Assyrian army commander of Sennacherib who said, literally, to the men

of Hezekiah, “You are relying now in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him” (2 Kings 18:21). Though his remarks actually referred to Egypt of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty, no words could better describe the political weakness of the Libyan dynasties.

**The Twenty-fourth Dynasty, of Saïs (c. 750—c. 715 B.C.).**—It is unknown how the Libyan rule of Tanis ended, or how it was replaced by the short-lived Twenty-fourth Dynasty of native Egyptian princes, but about 750 B.C. Lower Egypt found itself in the hands of Tefnakht of Saïs, in the western Delta. Of this king it is known only that he attempted to conquer Upper Egypt, which, with the important city of Thebes, was held by the Ethiopians.

Of Tefnakht’s son Bocchoris, as the Greeks called him—his Egyptian name was Bakenrenef—we have hardly any contemporary information, but later Greek authors tell many stories about him. He was, according to these sources, a wise king and a great lawgiver. After a short reign of five years (720–715 B.C.) he was deposed by the first king of the Ethiopian Dynasty and burned to death.

It is necessary to point out in this connection that we have only a very fragmentary knowledge concerning conditions in Egypt during this time. It is possible that several kinglets in addition to Tefnakht and Bocchoris ruled over sections of Lower Egypt. In 2 Kings 17:4, “So king of Egypt” is mentioned as having induced Hoshea to revolt against Assyria. Although one Egyptian monument (in the Berlin Museum) contains the hieroglyphic royal name “So,” and the Assyrian sources mention him under the name of *Sib’u*, we have no further information about this king who probably ruled over a small area of the Delta.

**The Ethiopian Kings of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (c. 715—663 B.C.).**—Nubia, today partly in Egypt, partly in Sudan, was generally called Ethiopia by classical authors. Hence, the Ethiopian kings of ancient times were Nubians and did not come from the Abyssinian highland, as the term Ethiopian might indicate.

Nubia belonged to Egypt during most of its historical period up to the Twenty-first Dynasty. Although Egyptian kings occasionally had to subdue rebellions, Nubia usually had been rather quiet and had caused little trouble. However, the time of Egyptian rule ended in the 10th century B.C. during the time of the weak rulers of the Twenty-first Dynasty, when Nubia shook off the Egyptian yoke and founded an independent kingdom with its capital at Napata, near Mt. Barkal and the Fourth Cataract of the Nile. The Egyptian religion, which had been introduced to Nubia during the many centuries of Egyptian rule, was retained, and the Amen cult was practiced in a more conservative style than in Egypt itself.

In his excavation of Napata the American Egyptologist G. A. Reisner uncovered pyramids, temples, and palaces. He was able to reconstruct the history of Nubia from the 10th century to about 300 B.C. and to give us the list of kings who ruled in Napata in unbroken sequence until the capital was moved for some unknown reason to Meroë (about 130 mi. [209 km.] north of Khartoum), where the Meroëtic kingdom existed until A.D. 355 and in turn gave way to the Abyssinian power of Axum.

After Nubia gained its independence in the 10th century B.C. and thereafter remained in isolation for about 200 years, it looked with envious eyes toward Egypt, whose political feebleness obvious to everyone. About 750 B.C. the Nubian king Kashta

marched north and took all of southern Egypt, including Thebes, the most famous and glorious of all Egyptian cities. The highest ecclesiastical power of the Amen temple at Thebes was Shepenupet II, the daughter of King Osorkon III of the Twenty-third Dynasty, called the “god’s wife.” The office of high priestess had already existed for a long time, and was usually held by a princess of royal blood, by way of securing the loyalty of the priesthood of Amen to the ruling house of Egypt. Kashta forced the officiating “god’s wife” to adopt his own daughter as her successor, and thus bound the priesthood of Amen and the tremendous possessions of that god to his dynasty.

Piankhi, the son and successor of Kashta, felt that his rule over Upper Egypt was threatened by Tefnakht of Saïs, for which reason he marched north and conquered the remaining part of Egypt. His campaign is described on a great stele, containing one of the most detailed and interesting historical texts that has come down to us. Although all Egypt was conquered by Piankhi, he withdrew from the Delta again and left Tefnakht in possession of it. Shabaka, however, the next Ethiopian king, put an end to the Twenty-fourth Dynasty by defeating and killing Bocchoris in 715 B.C., as has already been related.

Piankhi, having conquered all of Egypt, made Thebes his capital. It was the last time that the old and venerated city became the center of Egyptian life and culture. Once more great building activities were carried on, as in the best days of the Eighteenth Dynasty. However, the new glory lasted only a little more than 50 years (715–663 B.C.), and came then to an inglorious end, as the Assyrians invaded Egypt and destroyed Thebes.

**Egypt in Decline.**—Piankhi’s successors were Shabakak, Shabataka, Taharka, and Tanutamon. According to recently published documents Taharka came to the throne about 690 B.C., at the age of 20, as coregent with his brother Shabataka. This coregency continued till the death of the latter six years later. From then on Taharka was sole ruler until 664 B.C., when his nephew Tanutamon ascended the throne. Taharka is known from the Bible under the name of Tirhakah (2 Kings 19:9). We are told there that Sennacherib, when besieging Libnah in Judea, probably after 690 B.C., heard that Taharka was approaching with his army to aid Hezekiah and save Judah from impending annihilation. However, there is no evidence that Taharka really intervened actively in Hezekiah’s favor. The rumor may not have been true. It is actually with reference to the Ethiopian Dynasty that the statement of Rabshakeh (2 Kings 18:21) was made, a statement that was true not only at that time, but also later, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

Difficulties in other parts of the Assyrian Empire which required Sennacherib’s full attention elsewhere, and the catastrophe Sennacherib’s army suffered in Palestine, save Egypt temporarily and postponed the end that was evidently soon to come to the proud but feeble kingdom on the Nile.

Esarhaddon, the next Assyrian king, conquered Egypt in 670 B.C. for seven years made it an Assyrian province. We have recovered the famous victory stele of Esarhaddon set up in the north Syrian site of Zenjirli. It depicts the kings of Tyre and Egypt (Taharka) as prisoners of the king of Assyria, the former being depicted as a larger figure than the latter, since the king of Tyre was considered more important than the king of miserable Egypt.

On a stele found in Napata, Tanutamon, the last Ethiopian king who ruled over Upper Egypt, tells that a dream led him to attempt the conquest of Egypt anew. He succeeded in winning most of Upper Egypt and even took Memphis, the Lower Egyptian capital, but

could not expel the Assyrian garrisons from the Delta. His success was short-lived, however, and he had to retreat when Assurbanipal marched against him and conquered Thebes. This city, the most beautiful of all ancient Egyptian cities, was completely destroyed. Two of its tall obelisks were transported to Assyria to demonstrate to the Assyrians and the world that a new day had come, and that the Egyptian power had been broken forever. The words of the prophet Nahum reflect the tremendous impression that the destruction of Thebes, the queen of all ancient cities, made on contemporaries (Nahum 3:8).

For the ensuing history of Egypt see Section XIII, "Egypt in the Saïte Period."

### **VIII. The Assyrian Empire (933—612 B.C.)**

The Assyrian Empire period is only an episode in the long history of this world, but to the student of the Bible it is of great importance because of the decisive role Assyria played in the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This importance can be seen from the fact that Assyria and its people are mentioned some 150 times in Scripture. Six illustrious Assyrian kings are mentioned by name in the Bible, and the names of 10 Hebrews kings—6 of Israel and 4 of Judah—appear in the royal Assyrian inscriptions. Furthermore, the fact that the kingdom of Israel came t

**Assyrian Religion.**—The religion of the Assyrians was similar to that of the racially related Babylonians; in fact, many Babylonian deities were adopted and worshiped, as, for instance, Marduk, Ishtar, Tammuz, and others. The chief god was Ashur, the ancient local god of the city that carried his name. He was depicted as a winged sun that protected and guided the king, his principal servant, but was worshiped also under the symbol of a tree representative of fertility. The influence of other nations was also apparent on Assyrian religion. In this way some peoples, such as the Amorites, gained power over the Assyrians during the first half of the second millennium. Thus the gods Dagan and Adad gained recognition. Other conquerors of Assyria, like the Indo-European Hurrians of Mitanni, left behind them their religious concepts. Hence, we find in Assyrian religion little that was purely national and much that had been borrowed from other cultures.

In Assyria the king was neither a god, like Pharaoh in Egypt, nor the representative of the god, as in Sumeria. He was Ashur's chief priest and general, who carried out his god's desires and military campaigns, periodically giving account of the faithful fulfillment of his duties through "letters to the god," of which some have been preserved to the present day.

**Assyrian Chronology.**—The Assyrians invented a method of designating years that, in a modified form, was later followed by the Greeks and the Romans. High officials, including the king, were appointed once during life to serve for one year as *limmu*, an honorary office requiring the performance of no duties except that of giving his name to the year in which he was *limmu*. The Greek equivalent of the Assyrian *limmu* is the word *eponym*; hence the chronological lists containing the names of *limmu* are called Eponym

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<sup>1</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jos 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Canons. These lists are of great value in reconstructing the chronology of Assyria, particularly that of the period to 900 to 650 B.C. (see p. 155).

**Assyria Before Tiglath-pileser I (to c. 1112 B.C.).**—The princes of Assur had been vassals of the ruling dynasties of southern Mesopotamia when Illushuma (c. 1850 B.C.), in the time of the dynasties of Isin and Larsa (see Vol. I, p. 136), made himself independent and succeeded in extending his power over great areas that previously belonged to his overlords. His son Erishum (c. 1825 B.C.), and more so his great-grandson Sargon I (c. 1780 B.C.), seem to have played with the idea of world dominion. This can be gathered from the name Sargon bore, in imitation of the great hero and founder of the empire of Akkad, and also from his program of political expansion. Successful military campaigns strengthened the young independent nation and extended its territory. Business relations were opened with foreign countries, and trading colonies and outposts were established. The discovery of tablets in Asia Minor (the so-called Capadocian tablets) much information concerning the extent of Assyrian commercial activities has become available.

However, the short period of Assyrian independence ended soon after the death of Sargon I. Commercial connections with Asia Minor were broken, and Assyria itself became a bone of contention between two emerging powers, the Elamites and the Amorites. The Amorite Shamshi-Adad I (c. 1749–1717 B.C.), who claimed that his father Ilukapkapu had been king of Assur, succeeded in making himself king of Assyria. Like his great contemporary, Hammurabi, the Amorite king of Babylon, Shamshi-Adad planned to become sole ruler of Mesopotamia, as his title reveals, “King of the Universe” being the most significant one. He conquered the great city of Mari on the Euphrates and made his son its king. A victory stele found in the Syrian city of Mardin reveals, furthermore, that he also extended his power over northern Syria. When he died, the strongest opponent of Hammurabi was gone. His son and later descendants were not able to continue his policies, and Assyria degenerated once more into a second-rate power. It is not certain that Hammurabi and his successors ever exercised sovereignty over Assyria.

Next came the Hurrians of Mitanni, who overran Assyria and made it part of their empire. The Assyrian kings mentioned in the king lists for this period cannot have been more than vassals. It was Eriba-Adad (c. 1390–1364 B.C.) who began his reign as Mitanni’s vassal and referred to himself as priestly prince of Assur. Upon the death of Tushratta and the collapse of Mitanni he once more became a free and independent king.

In Ashur-ubalit I (1364–1328 B.C.), Eriba-Adad’s son, we find once more an Assyrian ruler who sought to advance the power of his country. He was a contemporary of the Egyptian revolutionary king Ikhnaton; in fact, two of Ashur-ubalit’s letters to that Pharaoh have been found in the Amarna collection. In the first he calls himself merely king of the land Assur, but in the second he designates himself as brother of the Pharaoh. By this he claims to be great king, having taken the place in world politics formerly held by the king of Mitanni. Ashur-ubalit was an energetic ruler and knew how to achieve his aims. He occupied Upper Mesopotamia as far as Carchemish, and forced Kassite Babylonia to recognize his supremacy over southern Mesopotamia.

It was necessary, however, for the work of Ashur-ubalit to be repeated several times by his successors before Assyria’s power over all Mesopotamia was recognized even to a limited degree. Hence we read in the royal annals that successive kings led repeated

military campaigns against Hanigalbat, the name by which the land of Mitanni was known in later times. They fought also against the more powerful Hittites to the west. The fortunes of war were not always on Assyria's side, and territories that had been gained by painful campaigns were often lost. However, these continual wars seem to have strengthened the martial spirit of the numerically small people of Assyria, and gained for it the respect of other great nations. As a result, the kings of the Hittites, Egypt, and Babylon were finally forced to recognize the little king of Assur as "brother," in acknowledgment of his claim to be a great king. Thus the 13th century saw three great Assyrian kings, Adadnirari I, Shalmaneser I, and Tukulti-Ninurta I.

Adadnirari I (c. 1306–1274 B.C.), of whom long inscriptions are known, was a great conqueror. He defeated Babylonia and established a new southern frontier of Assyria that incorporated the region of Kirkuk. He fought against the Gutti and Lullupi in the Zagros Mts., and overran all Hanigalbat, destroying its capital and building an Assyrian palace there.

Shalmaneser I (c. 1274–1244 B.C.) practically repeated the campaigns of his father, and also defeated eight allied kings of the land of Urarti (later Urartu), the Armenian region around Lake Van, in later times one of the most formidable enemies of Assyria. Adadnirari founded the city of Calah and moved the capital from Assur to the new city.

The next king, Tukulti-Ninurta I (c. 1244–1207 B.C.), who again moved the capital to a new location, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, was extremely temperamental and fanatical. He became the first Assyrian warrior-king whose ruthless methods of warfare are also well known from the later empire period. Elaborate historical records report his campaigns against Subartu in northern Mesopotamia, the Nairi lands of Urartu, where he claims to have defeated 43 local kings, the Gutti and Elamites in the eastern mountains, the Ahlamu (Aramaeans) of the desert, and the Babylonian. He captured the Babylonian king and brought the sacred Marduk statue of Babylon to Assur. However, his rule over Babylon was of only short duration, because the Babylonians, supported by the Elamites, shook off the Assyrian yoke soon after the capture of their city.

Tukulti-Ninurta's end marks the conclusion of the first period of Assyrian conquests, which had now lasted for about a century. Assyria then declined under a series of insignificant kings. There are no indications that the Sea Peoples, which at this time subdued the Hittite empire and invaded Syria, had anything to do with this period of Assyrian weakness, mostly during the 12 century B.C.

**Tiglath-pileser I and Later (1113—933 B.C.).**—The Assyrian ideal of world dominion found a worthy champion in the person of Tiglath-pileser I (1113–1074 B.C.). The Assyrians apparently never lost sight of this ideal, which from the 14th century to the 7th was pursued consistently whenever circumstances were favorable. During the first years of his reign Tiglath-pileser began to reestablish the earlier empire of Tukulti-Ninurta I. He reported his accomplishments in the now-famous documents he deposited in the foundation of the Anu and Adad temple at Assur, and which were used in 1857 to prove that the young science of Assyriology had come of age. Copies of these texts were then given to four scholars who, independently and correctly, translated each of them, thus proving that the riddle of cuneiform script had been solved (see Vol. I, p. 111).

The king carried out campaigns in the northern Nairi lands, then went against the Mushki, who had recently pushed east from Asia Minor. Eventually, he reached the Black Sea, and also forced Malatia in Hanigalbat to pay tribute. After the completion of

his northern campaigns he turned southward, took the Babylonian cities Dur-Kurigalzu, Sippar, Babylon, and Opis, but allowed the defeated Babylonians to retain a certain amount of independence.

When Tiglath-pileser marched into Syria to cut cedars of Lebanon for his buildings, the Syrian and Phoenician princes, among them those of Sidon and Byblos, paid tribute. However, Tyre, trusting in its island impregnability, refused. Arvad invited the king to a trip on the Mediterranean, where he hunted a sea monster. Even the Pharaoh of Egypt cautiously sent gifts to the powerful Assyrian monarch, among them a crocodile, which the king publicly exhibited in Assur. However, Tiglath-pileser found it difficult to keep back the pressure of the Aramaeans, who came against him in wave after wave.

This Assyrian king was a true empire builder, and his kingdom was at least equal in importance to those of the Hittites of Egyptians of former ages. But there was one great difference between the former empires and the new one. By those earlier empires vassals had been considered as human beings, and a certain generosity was frequently shown toward defeated enemies. The Assyrians, however, had but one aim—to subject every nation to the might of their god Ashur. Accordingly, they left their foes the choice between unconditional subjection and annihilation.

The Aramaeans, whom Tiglath-pileser's military genius held in check, proved too strong for his successors. The Aramaeans met no resistance in Babylonia, and infiltrated more and more into the areas that the Assyrians had claimed as their own. For almost a century and a half after Tiglath-pileser's death Assyria was pressed back to its home country on the Tigris and played the role of a secondary power, while the Aramaeans pressed their conquest of Syria and northern Mesopotamia and founded numerous city states. The Aramaean tribes of the south, better known as Chaldeans, in the meantime took over Babylonia and formed a dynasty which, though frequently interrupted by the Assyrians during the centuries that followed, nevertheless remained unbroken until the middle of the 6th century B.C.

**The Resurrection of Assyria From Ashur-dan II to Shalmaneser III (933—824 B.C.).**—Another strong Assyrian king rose up in the person of Ashur-dan II (933–910 B.C.). As a worthy descendant to Tiglath-pileser I, he reorganized, first of all, Assyria's military and economic forces, and then began the reconquest of the Aramaean parts of Mesopotamia. The royal annals tell of how the Assyrian kings annually led their armies to the north and northwest. The five kings following Ashur-dan II, Adadnirari II (910–889 B.C.), Tukulti-Ninurta II (889–884 B.C.), Ashurnasirpal II (884–859 B.C.), and Shalmaneser III (859–824 B.C.), each the son of his predecessor, seem to have been possessed by only one desire—the defeat of the Aramaeans and the reconquest of their territory.

Perhaps no other century of antiquity saw so much bloodshed as the 9th and nowhere else were so many lives sacrificed as in northern Mesopotamia and Syria during the reigns of the five aforementioned kings. Hardly ever have treaties been concluded and broken so frequently as in this period. The people of the subject nations, who repeatedly witnessed the murder of their loved ones and the destruction of their homes and fields, seem to have considered the frequent Assyrian expeditions to be divinely ordained plagues (see Isa. 10:5), whereas the Assyrian kings on their part seem to have felt it a sacred duty to avenge with fire and sword the continual rebellions of their subjects.



Adadnirari II, having conquered the land of Hanigalbat, including its capital, Nisibis, broke with the custom of requiring annual tribute and made the land an Assyrian province. When Ashurnasirpal II reconquered this country following another revolt, he did it with such inhuman cruelty that a revolt in this region never again proved possible. He was successful in extending the Assyrian Empire once more to its approximately size of the time of Tiglath-pileser I. But there was one important difference—Assyria was now ruled with an iron hand, and mercy was unknown wherever Ashurnasirpal held sway. The empire was divided into provinces ruled by Assyrian governors. The provinces consisted of organized districts with cities as centers. The populations of these provinces were pressed by the Assyrian tax collectors to the point that they lived for only one purpose, to pour out tribute to satisfy the insatiable thirst of the Assyrian monarch.

Shalmaneser III, who came to the throne at an advanced age in 859 B.C., not only knew how to keep his father's empire intact but was successful in extending it into new areas. He was the first Assyrian king to have contact with the little kingdom of Israel. Israel had developed into a respectably large kingdom during the reign of David and Solomon, when Assyria and Egypt were too weak to interfere. However, the breakup of the Hebrew kingdom into two states after Solomon's death (931/30 B.C.) coincided with the resurrection of Assyrian power when Ashur-dan II came to the throne in 933 B.C., and Assyrian eyes again turned greedily toward the west. Yet, as long as the battle was waged only against the states in northern Mesopotamia, Israel had not much to fear from the powerful state on the Tigris; but when the danger of being overrun came nearer and nearer with every new king and each new expansion of the Assyrian Empire, the kings of Israel have felt increasing alarm. Finally they were drawn into this conflict, as Judah was also eventually.

Whether Ahab, who is mentioned as one of the allies fighting against Shalmaneser III at Qarqar in 853 B.C., took part in the anti-Assyrian alliance of his own volition or whether he was forced to do so by Damascus (Syria) is uncertain. This will be discussed in the section on the history of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah. From now on, royal Assyrian inscriptions mention Israelite kings rather frequently. During the next 130 years there were many clashes of interest between the two powers, until the kingdom of Israel followed the example of other Syrian and Palestinian states in becoming an Assyrian province.

It would lead too far afield to follow Shalmaneser III on his numerous campaigns, of which good records in word and picture are extant; nevertheless a short outline of his military accomplishments is necessary in order to understand the political situation in Western Asia during the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. The Assyrian king conquered, first, Til-Barsip, capital of the powerful Aramaean state of Bit-Adini on the upper Euphrates. The population was deported to Assyria, and Assyrian colonists were moved into the area. Til-Barsip was rebuilt and called "Shalmaneser's castle." Henceforth this city became the headquarters and point of departure for several campaigns against city states in Cilicia and Syria, whose conquest opened the silver mines of the Taurus Mts. and the forests of the Amanus Mts. to the land-hungry Assyrians.

In Syria 12 allied princes, including Ahab of Israel, met Shalmaneser at Qarqar in 853 B.C. Adadidri of Damascus (the second of three Ben-hadads mentioned in the Bible) was the leader. Although Shalmaneser claimed in high-sounding words to have won a brilliant

victory, he could not hide the fact that his first encounter with the Syrian opponents had ended at best in a draw, perhaps even victory, for the allies. However, Shalmaneser did not forget his objective, and in 848 made a second attempt against practically the same coalition. Again the allies withstood him successfully, and even his third campaign was not a full success. When Hazael followed Adadidri on the throne of Damascus, the Assyrian king marched up to Hazael's capital and destroyed its palm gardens, but was not able to conquer the city. Jehu of Israel, who had usurped the throne and was not ready for a fight, thought it wise to pay tribute. This fact is depicted on the famous Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser, which was found in Calah and is now in the British Museum. The Assyrian king reached the Mediterranean at the Dog River near Beirut, farther south than any of his predecessors. There he had his picture cut in relief on rock.

Shalmaneser III also gained some territory in the north and reached the sources of the Tigris, where he offered sacrifices. He did not, however, attack the strong kingdom of Urartu, which, under Sardur I, was determined to remain independent. Shalmaneser later entered Babylonian politics, upon an occasion when two brothers contested the throne. He allowed Babylonian politics, upon an occasion when two brothers contested the throne. He allowed Babylonia to retain its independence, but exhibited Assyrian power to the people of Lower Mesopotamia by marching down to the Persian Gulf, on the way accepting tribute in gold, ivory, and elephant hides from the region to the south of Babylonia, including the important Aramaean state of Bit-Jakin. The fame and awe of Assyria had become so great that all gates were opened to the king. Very seldom was so great success gained with so little effort.

During the greater part of his reign, which lasted for more than 30 years, Shalmaneser enjoyed the faithful assistance of his commander in chief (*turtan*), Daian-ashur. During his last years, however, a serious revolt of the governors broke out and destroyed his lifework. From now on till his death in 824 B.C. he was scarcely able to maintain his position at Calah. The reasons for this revolt, led by one of Shalmaneser's sons, are not clear, and lay either in the discontent with the old king's decision concerning his successor or in his foreign or domestic policy.

**Period of Imperial Dissolution (824—746 B.C.).**—Although the power of the empire declined during the last years of Shalmaneser III, there was no complete breakup of authority over the conquered areas. The next king, Shamshi-Adad V (824—810 B.C.), succeeded, in three campaigns, in restoring Assyrian prestige, and in this he was supported by the Babylonian king Marduk-zakir-shum.

At this time begins a leaning toward Babylonia and its culture, which the Assyrians always unconsciously recognized as superior to their own. Shamshi-Adad took a Babylonian princess, Sammu-ramat, as wife and used the Babylonian language for royal inscriptions. Although he and his son both found it necessary to conquer Babylonia repeatedly to punish acts of enmity, these two Assyrian kings never dared to incorporate, as a province, that famous land, considered the mother of Assyrian culture.

When Shamshi-Adad V died in 810 B.C., his son Adad-nirari III (810—782 B.C.) was too young for the kingship, and therefore his wife, Sammu-ramat, reigned a number of years for her son as regent. Her superior personality and the fact that she is the only woman ever to rule over Assyria made such a deep impression on her contemporaries and on later generations that under the name of Semiramis she became the central figure of

numerous legends of antiquity that live on in Iraq to the present day. Several ancient works, such as aqueducts and monumental buildings, are attributed to her.

A strange religious revolution took place in the time of Adad-nirari III, which can be compared with that of the Egyptian Pharaoh Ikhnaton. For an unknown reason Nabu (Nebo), the god of Borsippa, seems to have been proclaimed sole god, or at least the principal god, of the empire. A Nabu temple was erected in 787 B.C. at Calah, and on a Nabu statue one of the governors dedicated to the king appear the significant words, "Trust in Nabu, do not trust in any other god" The favorite place accorded Nabu in the religious life of Assyria is revealed by the fact that no other god appears so often in personal names. This monotheistic revolution had as short a life as the Aton revolution in Egypt. The worshipers of the Assyrian national deities quickly recovered from their impotence, reoccupied their privileged places, and suppressed Nabu. This is the reason that so little is known concerning the events during the time of the monotheistic revolution. Biblical chronology places Jonah's ministry in the time of Jeroboam II, of Israel, who reigned from 793 to 753 B.C. Hence, Jonah's mission to Nineveh may have occurred in the reign of Adad-nirari III, and may have had something to do with his decision to abandon the old gods and serve only one deity. This explanation can, however, be given only as a possibility, because source material for that period is so scanty and fragmentary that a complete reconstruction of the political and religious history of Assyria during the time under consideration is not yet possible.

Adad-nirari III's successors conducted several military campaigns westward, but they were not able to suppress the subject nations permanently, nor to keep back the growing power of Urartu, which took over more and more areas formerly belonging to the Assyrian Empire. A revolt in Assur in 763 B.C., and the inactivity of some kings, brought Assyria to the point of collapse. If a strong ruler—Tiglath-pileser III—had not come to the throne, Assyria might have vanished from history more than a century earlier than it did.

**The Formation of the New Assyrian Empire by Tiglath-pileser III (745—727 B.C.).**—Tiglath-pileser III came into power as a usurper during a palace revolt at Calah in 746, but he did not actually take the throne until the second month in 745. That he chose for his ruling name that of a great former empire builder reveals his ambitions and plans. Like the great Tiglath-pileser I, he systematically and consistently pursued the plan to re-establish the Assyrian Empire.

The new king found himself face to face with three main problems of foreign policy which had to be solved in order to re-establish Assyrian power: (1) relations had to be clarified with Babylonia, which had fallen prey to the southern Aramaeans (Chaldeans); (2) Assyrian dominion over the Syro-Palestinian areas had to be re-established; (3) the power of Urartu, the great northern rival of Assyria, had to be curtailed. The way in which he solved these problems gives him the right to be called one of the greatest of Assyrian rulers.

The first task was a solution of the Babylonian question, which Tiglath-pileser carried out in two states. In the year of his accession he went to Babylonia, defeated the Aramaean tribes that occupied great parts of the country, and deported them to other parts of his empire. The weak Babylonian king Nabonassar, whose power hardly reached beyond his city walls, was, for the time being, left unmolested. Two short-lived kings were tolerated on Babylon's throne after Nabonassar's death in 734 B.C., since Tiglath-

pileser was engaged elsewhere and did not have time for Babylonia. As soon as he had his hands free, however, he set out to restore order to the chaotic political situation in Babylon, where Aramaean sheiks were the real rulers. He turned against them, decisively defeated them, and, in an act without precedent for an Assyrian king, “took the hands” of the god Marduk in token of accepting the kingship of Babylon—under the ruling name Pulu. Recognizing that Assyria would never be able to rule Babylonia, because of its own inferiority complex with respect to the superior Babylonian culture, he conceived a novel solution that consisted of uniting the two states as equals under the rulership of one king—who was thus monarch of both Assyria and Babylonia.

Tiglath-pileser’s second task, the reconquest of Syria, was accomplished during the process of a number of military campaigns. He encountered strong opposition, especially at the cities of Arpad (now *Tell Erfâd*), north of Aleppo, and Samal (now *Zenjirli*), whose conquest was time consuming and costly. Other city states surrendered only after bloody defeats. However, after three long campaigns the majority of the Syrian states once more belonged to the Assyrian Empire. Finally Damascus and Israel were also defeated. The state of Damascus (Syria) was made into an Assyrian province, as were the northern and eastern parts of Israel and the coastal area of Palestine. Samaria, Israel’s capital, was left with the southern part of the country as a semi-independent vassal state.

Hence, we read in the Bible and in royal Assyrian annals that Menahem, of Israel, paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser (Pul; 2 Kings 15:19), and of the replacement of Pekah by Hoshea. The king of Judah, who had sought Tiglath-pileser’s help against Samaria and Damascus, and who went to Damascus to be received as Assyria’s vassal (2 Kings 16:10), is also mentioned in the Assyrian records. It is therefore not astonishing that the first Assyrian king mentioned by name in the Bible is Tiglath-pileser. He appears there under his Assyrian as well as under his Babylonian name, Pul (2 Kings 16:7, 10; 2 Chron. 28:20; 2 Kings 15:19; and 1 Chron 5:26, where the Hebrew text should be translated, “And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pileser king of Assyria”).

Tiglath-pileser’s third task was the subjugation of Urartu, which he began by conquering the states allied with its king, Sardur II. By overrunning the northern Mesopotamian and Syrian city states, much of Sardur’s strength was broken. The decisive battle, however, was fought at Kummuh, west of the Euphrates, where Sardur was badly defeated but was able to escape to his capital Tushpa (now Toprakkale) at Lake Van. Although Tiglath-pileser’s subsequent siege of Tushpa was unsuccessful, Urartu’s power was broken, and the Assyrians occupied the greater part of Urartu, making of it the province Ulluba.

After each conquest the Assyrian king transplanted the native populations to other parts of the empire. This policy resulted in a large-scale forced migration of peoples. Tiglath-pileser planned and succeeded in breaking the nationalistic spirit of the various nations, by tearing them away from their motherland and the soil they loved. This exchange of nations was intended to create an empire whose people would no longer consider themselves citizens of Urartu, Israel, Babylonia, or Damascus, but as citizens of Assyria. This singularly successful king thus initiated a policy followed by his Assyrian successors and later by the Babylonians. This policy came to have a decisive effect on the later history of the Near East.

**Shalmaneser V (727—722 B.C.).**—Shalmaneser V, son of Tiglath-pileser, followed the policies of his father as closely as he could. Hence, as soon as he had come to the throne, he had himself crowned also as king of Babylon, where he bore the name Ululai. Unrest in the west forced him to turn his attention to Palestine soon after his accession to the throne, in order to keep that region within the empire. Hanno of Gaza, who had escaped to Egypt in Tiglath-pileser's time, on hearing of Shalmaneser's accession to the throne, returned and formed a coalition with Assyria's vassal prince, Hoshea of Israel, with a usurper in Hamath, and with the rulers of the cities of Arpad, Damascus, and Simyra. Trusting in the help of Egypt, these several princes refused the payment of tribute to Assyria, and Shalmaneser was obliged to restore his authority in the usual Assyrian way. Part of this campaign was directed against the semi-independent but politically unreliable state of Israel, which the king planned to annihilate. He besieged Samaria for three years inclusive (see on p. 136), and probably took the city near the end of his reign.

Although Sargon II, the following king, claimed to have conquered Samaria, there is evidence that his claim is unjustified and that he attributed to himself what Shalmaneser V had accomplished near the close of his reign. As Shalmaneser's army commander, Sargon may, however, have played an important role in the conquest of Samaria. As had by now become a custom, he deported the remnant of the kingdom of Israel to northern Mesopotamia (Habor and Gozan), to the motherland of Assyria (Halah), and to Median cities in the northeastern provinces (2 Kings 18:11). On the other hand, Babylonians from Babylon and Cuthah, and Syrians from Hamath and Sepharvaim were transplanted to repopulate the land of Israel (2 Kings 17:24).

**Sargon II (722—705 B.C.).**—The new king was a usurper, and probably the murderer of his predecessor. Whatever the differences between Sargon and Shalmaneser may have been in domestic matters, in the field of external policies no change was contemplated or carried out, and Sargon closely followed the pattern set by Tiglath-pileser. His problems were similar to those of Tiglath-pileser's reign, with the difference that the former king had come to the throne at a time of national weakness and had built up an empire from practically nothing, while Sargon had only to hold what he inherited. Sargon did have one additional problem, however, that of meeting a threat of invasion from Indo-European tribes pushing southward through the Caucasus and eastward from Anatolia. King Mita of the Mushki, the Phrygian Midas of Greek writers, was his chief opponent. By inducing Carchemish to revolt, Mita forced a showdown with Sargon. This obliged the latter to take that famous city on the Euphrates (717 B.C.) and deport its population, which had until now kept Hittite culture alive and had made use of Hittite hieroglyphs in writing.

The Urartean kingdom under Rusa I was sorely pressed by the Cimmerians and the Medes, a welcome situation to Sargon in that it made that much easier the conquest of this traditional enemy country to the north. Sargon's Urartean campaign, carried out in his eighth year, is described in such detail on a famous tablet now in the Louvre in Paris that we are able to follow the royal army almost daily on its march and during its battles. While the conquest of Urartu and its subsequent weakness seemed to have advantages for the time being, the elimination of a strong northern buffer state had also undeniable disadvantages. It brought Assyria face to face with new barbaric tribes that a hundred years later were primarily responsible for the death of Assyria.

About that time Babylonia received an extremely able ruler in the person of Marduk-apal-iddina, the Merodach-baladan of the Bible (Isa. 39:1). He was an Aramaean of Bit-Jakin, against whom Sargon was powerless as the result of a grievous defeat at the hands of the Elamites, who supported Marduk-apaliddina. For 12 years Sargon was compelled to campaign in the west and north before he felt strong enough to turn once more against Babylonia. In 709 B.C., however, he succeeded in driving Marduk-apal-iddina out of Babylonia and making himself its king, as his two predecessors on the throne of Assyria had done. One year later he destroyed Dur-Jakin near the Persian Gulf, seat of the Chaldean state of Bit-Jakin, and made Marduk-apal-iddina's home country an Assyrian province.

Sargon had little trouble in Palestine, which, with the exception of Ashdod, a coastal city of Philistia, remained quiet. In the hope of receiving Egyptian, Edomite, and Judean assistance, its ruler tried to shake off the Assyrian yoke. As Isaiah predicted, the revolt was unsuccessful and the city was taken by Sargon's *turtan*, "commander in chief" ("Tartan" in Isa. 20:1). It may be mentioned in passing that Sargon's name was completely unknown from secular sources prior to the deciphering of cuneiform inscriptions, and that his very existence, and thus the accuracy of Isaiah, had been doubted by higher critics. However, Sargon's name was one of the first discovered in Assyrian records. This was the earliest discovery concerning Assyria made in Sargon's own capital Dur Sharrukin, now Khorsabad, where immense quantities of sculptures and inscribed royal records were brought to light.

Sargon's last years are wrapped in mystery. But on one of his eastern campaigns his army suffered a serious defeat, and he seems to have lost his life on that occasion.

**Sennacherib (705—681 B.C.).**—When Sennacherib came to the throne he was already trained in the art of ruling people, having been governor of the northern province of Amid during his father's reign. His character differed from that of Sargon II. He took a keen interest in the technical improvement of war equipment and in new building methods that made Nineveh the most glorious capital of the Assyrian period. In politics he showed a severity that knew no compromise, a weakness that made it difficult to rule successfully over a great empire and to keep together what he had inherited. The two outstanding events of his life to impress the memory of later generations—his senseless destruction of Babylon and his unsuccessful siege of Jerusalem—are, in the light of history, both considered political failures.

When Sennacherib came to the throne a revolt broke out among Syrian and Palestinian princes, who trusted in the help of Egypt. Sennacherib therefore marched to the west (701 B.C.) and was able to restore the former status in most places to which he came. When, after a long campaign, he finally camped at Lachish to make preparations for the siege of Jerusalem, he received tribute from Hezekiah of Judah, who in this way tried to appease the heartless king of Assyria. But Sennacherib would be satisfied with nothing less than the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. The demand, however, was rejected by Hezekiah, and Sennacherib, whose presence was apparently required elsewhere, seems to have broken off the campaign. At least, he claims no more in his victory inscriptions than having shut Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage. He did not claim to have taken the city or its king. Judah was saved for the time being, and not threatened again until toward the end of Hezekiah's reign (see PK 339).

Hezekiah, encouraged by Sennacherib's failure to take Jerusalem in 701 B.C., continued to participate in anti-Assyrian coalitions, which eventually brought the Assyrian armies back to Judea. For this second campaign of Sennacherib, made after Taharka's accession to the throne of Egypt (690 B.C.), no cuneiform sources are available. A new demand for surrender made by the Assyrian king to Hezekiah was rejected, with the encouragement and support of the prophet Isaiah. Although Isaiah had advised Hezekiah against participation in the coalition against Assyria, he was now, once the mistake had been made, on the side of the king and assured him that Sennacherib would "not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it" (Isa. 37:33). It was not an Egyptian army that saved Jerusalem upon this occasion, but a miracle. "Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (v. 36).

Even more troublesome than the west was Babylonia. Immediately after Sennacherib's accession to the throne Marduk-apal-iddina returned from Elam, and with the help of the Elamite king Shutrup-nachunde occupied the throne of Babylon for almost a year. However, Sennacherib marched against Babylonia in 703 B.C., defeated Marduk-apal-iddina, and installed as ruler Bel-ibni, a native Babylonian who had been educated in Assyria.

Shortly after Sennacherib's disastrous campaign in the west, Babylonia revolted again. Thereupon Sennacherib conducted another expedition against the Babylonians, in which great parts of the country were devastated. Taking Bel-ibni prisoner, Sennacherib made his own son, Ashur-nadin-shumi, king of Babylon. However, the Elamites took Babylon in 694 B.C. and put Nergal-ushezib on the throne, but this king was captured a year later by Sennacherib. After further upheavals the Chaldean Mushezib-Marduk ascended the throne in 692 B.C., and, according to the Babylonian Chronicle, defeated the Assyrian army sent against him. However, Sennacherib now became so impatient at the continual state of unrest in Babylonia that he determined to eliminate it as a trouble spot from his empire. Hence, when he captured the city in 689 B.C., he did what none of his predecessors had dared to do—he destroyed the Babylonian metropolis thoroughly and systematically, throwing the debris of temples and palaces into the river, so forcing it to change its course. Minor gods were smashed and the major ones taken to Assyria. This deed the Babylonian neither forgave nor forgot, and for it they took a terrible revenge about 77 years later, when they destroyed Nineveh.

Sennacherib's life was taken by his own sons, according to the Bible, the Babylonian Chronicle, and an inscription of Esarhaddon. Each of these records adds something to our fragmentary information on this heinous murder.

**Esarhaddon (681—669 B.C.).**—Esarhaddon, whose mother was an Aramaean, reversed his father's anti-Babylonian policies upon coming to the throne. Apparently belonging to a party that favored Babylon, he started out to rebuild the ruined city, although the Marduk statue was not returned until Ashurbanipal's reign. Once more the power of Marduk over Assur was demonstrated to an astonished world.

With the conquest of Egypt of Esarhaddon the outward might of the Assyrian Empire reached its greatest height and remained so until its final decline began during the reign of Ashurbanipal. Esarhaddon's first attempt to take Egypt in 673 B.C. was unsuccessful, and ended in defeat. But Taharka, an Ethiopian king of Egypt, surrendered two years later,

and when Memphis fell almost without a battle the whole country lay open before the Assyrians, and the wealth of the Nile country streamed into Assyria. Esarhaddon installed 22 local princes as rulers over the country, and gave them Assyrian governors as supervisors. Returning from Egypt, the king had a relief of himself cut in the rocks at the Dog River near Beirut, where he found one left by his great predecessor, Shalmaneser III, and also had victory steles set up in several Syrian cities. One of these was found at *Zenjirli*, in which the king is shown leading the kings of Tyre and Egypt by a cord as if they were wild animals. Heretofore no human being had ever possessed as great power as Esarhaddon. Neither Sargon of Agade (Akkad) nor Hammurabi had ruled over so many countries or peoples; but the signs of impending danger, already visible, troubled Esarhaddon. Barbaric nations such as the Scythians in the northwest, the Cimmerians in eastern Asia Minor and Armenia, and the Medes in the east continued to gain strength. Anticipating trouble, Esarhaddon asked the sun-god whether these people would be successful or whether they could be kept back. Trying to remove one evil through another, he concluded a treaty with the Scythians against the Cimmerians and Medes and gave his daughter to the Scythian chieftain Bartatua, whom Herodotus calls Protothyas.

In 672 B.C. Ashurbanipal was proclaimed crown prince of Assyria, and became virtually coregent with his father. Two years later, Shamash-shum-ukin, the older son of Esarhaddon, received the same dignity with respect to Babylon.

Esarhaddon's reign ended under a cloud. Egypt revolted, when Taharka of Ethiopia once more appeared on the scene, making it necessary for Esarhaddon to set out for the Nile to punish the rebels and restore order. He died in 669 B.C. on his way to Egypt.

**Ashurbanipal (669—627? B.C.).**—Led now by Esarhaddon's *turtan*, Sha-Nabu-shu, the Egyptian campaign was brought to a successful end. Necho, one of the rebellious princes who was brought to Nineveh as captive to receive punishment won the king's favor and was sent back to Egypt as an Assyrian vassal. His son Psamtik took the Assyrian name Nabu-shezibanni. Another attempt was made to liberate Egypt from the Assyrian yoke, by Taharka's successor Tanutamoni, but it was likewise unsuccessful. Ashurbanipal took Thebes and thoroughly destroyed that beautiful city. A few years later Psamtik was able to shake off the Assyrian yoke and to restore Egypt's independence. To hold Egypt in subjection proved to be so costly for Assyria at a time when it needed all its reserves to meet dangers from the west, north, and east that the Nile country had to be given up.

Ashurbanipal also had trouble in Babylon, where his own brother Shamash-shum-ukin revolted. The revolt failed, however, Babylon was taken, and Shamash-shum-ukin died in the flames of his palace. Ashurbanipal then crowned himself king of Babylon. He also waged several successful wars against Elam, which had supported Shamash-shum-ukin, and against Arabia, Syria, and Palestine. He was thus able to keep his shaky empire together. He even had the rare satisfaction of seeing most of his enemies perish before he left the scene of action. Gyges of Lydia, who had supported Psamtik in his revolt, lost throne and life in his war with the Cimmerians. Another rebel, the Chaldean prince Nabu-bel-shumati, committed suicide in order not to fall into Ashurbanipal's hands, and in Elam a number of minor kings lost their lives in the several wars with Assyria that finally crushed the proud kingdom of Elam and leveled its capital city, Susa.

The passing glory of Assyria and the wealth that poured into the royal coffers could not hide the fact that the days of that proud empire were numbered. So long as a strong



man held the reins of government in his hands the coming catastrophe was postponed, but a careful observer could already see that a different situation would arise whenever a weak ruler should come to the throne.

Ashurbanipal is especially well known as the collector of many books and the founder of the great library of Nineveh, which was discovered in the ruins of Nineveh in the middle of the 19th century. From this library, now in the British Museum, was derived much of our early information concerning Assyrian and Babylonian history and religion. Later other great cuneiform collections found in the ruined sites of Mesopotamia have provided additional valuable information. As a prince, originally destined to become a priest, he received a careful scholarly and priestly training, and for this reason took an interest in collecting the literary wealth of his time. He preserved for later ages copies of many valuable texts, the originals of which have long since disappeared.

The circumstances and date of his death are unknown. The year 626 B.C. was formerly given as the year of his death, and some thought that it was 631. Others say probably about 627. But since no Eponym Canon for his last years is known, the chronology of this period is somewhat uncertain.

**The End of the Assyrian Empire.**—Ashur-etil-ilani, a younger son of Ashurbanipal who owed his throne to Sin-shum-lishir, one of his father's generals, ruled for the next five years or so. The new king held southern Babylonia, but could not prevent Nabopolassar, a Chaldean army commander, from taking Babylon and making himself king. Although he thus lost Babylon permanently, Ashur-etil-ilani had a happier experience in his fight against the Medes, whose king, Phraortes, fell in battle. It is uncertain how and in what year Ashur-etil-ilani was succeeded by Sin-shar-ishkun, generally held to be his brother. (Some scholars even consider the two names as belonging to one king.)

Sin-shar-ishkun seems to have enjoyed a measure of success for a time. He campaigned against Babylonia, and even conquered Sippar. Also, the Medes under Phraortes' son Cyaxares were beaten. It is a curious fact that now, having lost its former strength, Assyria received help from former enemies such as the Scythians and Egyptians, who feared that its fall might give birth to other powers even more dangerous than Assyria had been.

Realizing Assyria's weakness, and following the principle that attack is the best defense, Nabopolassar of Babylon went on the offensive soon after he had become an independent king. He had some military successes, but also several setbacks, as revealed in the Babylonian Chronicle that covers his first three regnal years. Lack of extant records leaves us in the dark about his successes and defeats during the next seven years. In 616 B.C., the year for which chronicles are again available, Nabopolassar was on the offensive and conquered Assyrian and Aramaean towns on the middle Euphrates, but proved unable to withstand an Assyro-Egyptian army, which drove him back to Babylon. The following year Nabopolassar made an unsuccessful attempt to take the old city of Assur. This campaign also failed. He was not yet strong enough to defeat Assyria singlehanded. However, the Medes captured Tarbisu and Assur in 614 B.C. and the Median king Cyaxares concluded an alliance with Nabopolassar that was sealed by the marriage of the Babylonian crown prince Nebuchadnezzar to a Median princess. This political alliance decided the fate of Assyria, and after a siege of three months Nineveh fell to the united Medes and Babylonians, in 612 B.C. Sin-shar-ishkun died with his

family in the flames of his palace. Like Calah, Nineveh was destroyed so thoroughly that later generations did not even know of its location. The empire of Assyria was divided between Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, the former taking all the northern provinces, along with Assyria's claims to Asia Minor, and the latter receiving nominal control of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine. Actual control, however, could be won only through a show of power, and not simply by an understanding between the two victors.

With Egyptian help, an Assyrian prince by the name of Ashur-uballit essayed to re-establish the Assyrian state, with Haran as its capital, but was soon evicted by the Medes and Chaldeans. Assyria, the scourge of the nations for many centuries, ceased to exist, and its citizens experienced the same cruel treatment their rulers had meted out to many other peoples in the past. The words of Nahum, like those of other Hebrew prophets who had predicted the fall of the Assyrian Empire, were literally fulfilled:

"O king of Assyria:  
thy nobles shall dwell in the dust:  
thy people is scattered upon the mountains,  
and no man gathereth them.  
There is no healing of thy bruise;  
thy wound is grievous" (Nahum 3:18, 19).

### **IX. Phoenicia From the Earliest Times to Nebuchadnezzar II**

Phoenicia, though not mentioned under this name in the Old Testament, had many contacts with the Hebrews, and the history of this country is of some importance to the student of the Bible, who finds frequent mention of Phoenician cities such as Tyre, Sidon, Zarephath (Sarepta), Gebal (Byblos), and Arvad (Aradus).

The land of Phoenicia covered the narrow coastal strip of Syria north of the Bay of Acre and between the Lebanon mountain range and the Mediterranean, which consists of a number of small plains where the mountains recede from the sea, each of which was dominated by a maritime city. The coastal plain varies in width from 1/2 mi. to 3 mi. (.8 to 4.8 km.). In some places, as at the *Nahr el-Kelb*, the Dog river north of Beirut, the mountains drop precipitously to the sea, so that the road must be blasted out of the rocks. Anciently, the cities were built either on rocky islands off the coast—like Tyre and Arvad—or on the shore where land jutting out into the sea forms small bays in what is, for the most part, a straight coast line—as with Tripoli and Byblos. The country was well watered by a number of rivers from the Lebanon Mts., which in ancient times were heavily forested with cedars and other coniferous trees. Phoenicia was rich in grain, fruit, and wine, and as the principal exporter of cedarwood from the mountains and the products of the Syrian hinterland, it became the commercial clearing house of the ancient world.

The Greek name for the land, Phoenicia, is related to one of its principal exports, a purple-colored dye material called *phoinix*, "purple," or "crimson." However, they called themselves *Kena'ani*, that is, Canaanites, and their country Canaan, which agrees with Gen. 10:15–19, where the inhabitants of several Phoenician cities are listed as descendants of Canaan.

There is not sufficient source material available for a complete history of Phoenicia, and its earliest history is completely shrouded in obscurity. One of the Phoenician cities, however—Byblos—appears in Egyptian records of the third millennium as an important

city for the export of cedarwood. Excavations carried out in Byblos have shown strong Egyptian influence during the time of the Old (Egyptian) Kingdom. The later Tyrians claimed a tradition that their city had been founded about 2750 B.C., and the Sidonians claimed an even greater age for their city. The earliest mention of these important port cities of southern Phoenicia is found in the records of the Eighteenth Dynasty of Egypt, when all of Phoenicia was dominated by the rulers of the Nile valley. However, the fact that the Phoenicians had to pay tribute to Egypt and tolerate Egyptian garrisons in their cities did not materially affect their economic strength. Their foreign trade seems to have flourished, and their agents were found in Cyprus, on the coasts of Asia Minor, and in the Aegean Sea. Toward the end of the second millennium they extended their economic sphere of influence and sent ships to Sicily, Sardinia, North Africa, and Spain. Later, permanent colonies were founded in distant lands. Of these colonies Carthage became the most famous. It grew so strong, in fact, that in course of time it dared to challenge the expansionism of Rome. Tartessus, in Spain, the westernmost point of Phoenician influence, was one of several places named "Tarshish," or "smelter," to which sailed "ships of Tarshish" (Ps. 48:7; see on 1 Kings 10:22).

Until the close of the second millennium B.C. Sidon had held the most important place among the Phoenician port cities, but during the first millennium Tyre took the lead and kept it for many centuries. It seems that Phoenicia never developed a unified government controlling the whole country, but that each large city had its own ruler and that its control extended to smaller communities adjacent to it.

A number of rulers of Byblos are known from inscriptions found during the excavations of that city, but after the middle of the second millennium B.C. the political role of Byblos seems to have been at most a minor one. Hiram was the first ruler of Tyre whose name is known. He was contemporary with David and Solomon and assisted in the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. Also, his sailors participated with those of Solomon in expeditions to Ophir.

One of Hiram's later successors was Ethbaal, father of Ahab's infamous wife, Jezebel. He had been a priest of Astarte before becoming king of Tyre, which may explain his daughter's zeal for the religion of her native land, even when she became queen of Israel. During Ethbaal's reign the struggle with Assyria began in earnest, that country which from the 9th century B.C. onward sought to subjugate piecemeal all lands to the west. Hence, at the battle of Qarqar in 853, we find the king of the Phoenician city of Arvad, with 200 soldiers, in the coalition against Shalmaneser III. However, most of the other Phoenician cities agreed to pay tribute. Thus for a time they maintained comparative independence and continued their lucrative overseas trade unmolested.

An important episode in Phoenician history was the fight of Tyre against Shalmaneser V and Sargon II in the time of king Hezekiah of Judah. Tyre was besieged for five years and sorely hurt. It seems that the city was finally forced to surrender and once more made tributary. But Tyre rebelled again in Sennacherib's time, and was unsuccessfully besieged. Yet, when Sidon followed Tyre's example and rebelled against Esarhaddon, it was taken and destroyed (678 B.C.). Tyre remained independent a few years longer, but was finally forced back into the Assyrian fold by Ashurbanipal.

When the tottering Assyrian Empire was replaced by the Neo-Babylonian, Tyre took advantage of the political difficulties of the transitional period, declared itself independent, and refused to send tribute to Babylonia. As a result Nebuchadnezzar

moved against the city. He took mainland Tyre but besieged the island city for 13 years without success. He allowed the king to remain on the throne, but appointed a Babylonian high commissioner to safeguard Babylonian interests.

### **X. The Syrian States**

The name Syria is a geographical term designating an area that has varied in size from time to time. Present-day Syria does not include everything known as Syria in ancient times, and extends to areas that had never before been considered a part of it. In Roman times all the land from the Euphrates in the north to the Red Sea in the south was designated as Syria. At other times Palestine was thought of separately, and parts of northern and central Mesopotamia were included. Generally speaking, however, the geographical term Syria designates an area bordered on the east by the great Syrian Desert, in the west by the Mediterranean, in the north by the Taurus Mts., and in the south by Palestine, with the line between Syria and Palestine running approximately straight from the sea north of Acre to the Jordan north of the now-drained Lake Huleh.

The region thus marked out is intersected by two north-south mountain ranges. The western range is marked in the north by the *Jebel Akra* (5,241 ft.; 1,597 m.) and in the south by the Lebanon, which rises to more than 10,000 ft. (3,048 m.). The eastern range of mountains, called the Anti-Lebanon, ends in the south with Mt. Hermon (9,232 ft., or 2,814 m.). Between the two ranges lies a 12-mi.-wide (19.3 km.) highland valley, now called *Beqa'*, "the split," with its two rivers, the Litani, flowing south, and the Orontes, north. Both rivers eventually turn west and empty their waters into the Mediterranean. Several streams flow eastward from the Anti-Lebanon range and irrigate various oases of the Syrian Desert, of which Damascus, with its surrounding garden area, is the richest and largest.

Since the coastal region of Phoenicia was isolated by mountains from the rest of Syria, it experienced a history somewhat different from that of the hinterland, and has been treated separately in the preceding section. Thus, politically, Syria consisted essentially of city states that flourished around oases such as those of Damascus and Aleppo and others such as Kadesh, Qatna, Hamath, or Alalakh (*Tell 'Atshânah*) on the banks of inland rivers. The latter all lay in close proximity along the Orontes. The typical Syrian culture of later times is also found in Upper Mesopotamia, in the area which in the second millennium was known as the kingdom of Mitanni.

As in the case of Phoenicia, little is known of the history of this area prior to the middle of the second millennium. Egyptian and Babylonian texts of the first half of that millennium B.C., however, occasionally mention the rulers of the cities of Syria, and from their names we learn that they were Amorites, as were most of the rulers of Western Asia from 2200–1500 B.C. The Hyksos, who swept down to Egypt in the 18th century, passed through Syria on their way to the Nile valley and took possession of certain important cities, for instance Qatna, fortifying them in typical Hyksos manner with massive earth ramparts.

In the 16th century all Syria was conquered by Thutmose III and remained under Egyptian control for almost a century. However, during the reign of Amenhotep III and Ikhnaton, some of the subject native rulers took advantage of Egypt's weakness and made themselves independent. The strongest of these rebellious states was Amurru, of which we learn much from the Amarna Letters and the Hittite records of the period. During the

time of the Nineteenth Dynasty a new rival for the possession of Syria arose, the Hittites, with the result that Syria frequently became a battlefield where the two opposing powers met. With the appearance of the Peoples of the Sea toward the end of the 13th century B.C., the Hittites vanished from history as a nation, but their remnants retained possession of some Syrian cities such as Hamath and Carchemish, and preserved Hittite culture for several centuries more.

At that time the Aramaeans, who had lived in the plains of northern Mesopotamia for many centuries, moved south and either founded or took over a number of strong city states, of which Damascus and Zobah (north of Damascus) became the most powerful. It is for this reason that, from the time of David, these two states are frequently mentioned in contemporary Biblical records. David was able to hold them in subjection, but they regained their independence either during the reign of Solomon or immediately after his death. From that time on the Syrian states were enemies of the kingdom of Israel, with the result that Israel fought numerous wars against the Syrians, especially against Damascus. For the history of those wars see pp. 81–85.

From the 9th century onward, the Syrian states shared the fate of other nations of Western Asia, upon whom the kings of Assyria cast greedy eyes. For two centuries one Assyrian campaign after another was directed against one or more of these Aramaean states of Syria, to ensure a constant flow of tribute, until Tiglath-pileser III inaugurated the policy of transplanting conquered nations to remote districts of the empire in the effort to replace national consciousness with loyalty to the Assyrian Empire. Hence, one Syrian city state after another vanished under the relentless onslaught of the Assyrian war machine. Finally in 732 B.C. as one of the last, Damascus fell and became a province of Assyria.

The fall of Damascus marked the disappearance of the characteristics Syrian culture from that area, which, in a somewhat changed form, was perpetuated for a time as a world culture. The Aramaic language spread with the dispersion of Syria's population, and within two centuries after the fall of Damascus became a medium of communication, spoken or at least understood, from the southern border of Egypt throughout the lands of the Fertile Crescent and Persia, and even as far as the western border of India. Although the Syrians had never constituted a political unit, and had never been able to extend their control over extensive parts of the world, their language conquered the world in somewhat the same way as Greek did some centuries later.

## **XI. The United Kingdom of Israel (c. 1050–931 B.C.)**

Previous sections of this article have covered the history of Egypt and Mesopotamia to the 7th century B.C. This section deals with the 120 years of Israel's history under its first three kings, each of whom ruled approximately 40 years (2 Sam. 5:4; 1 Kings 11:42; Acts 13:21). Sections XII and XV will take up the history of the separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Since their invasion of Canaan the Hebrews had slowly grown in strength and taken root through continual struggle with the nations living in and around Palestine. They had lived in the land for about three and a half centuries when they felt the need of a unified government. Hitherto they had been guided by Spirit-led men called judges, without assurance that competent leadership would continue after the death of each judge. From a strictly human, political point of view the popular desire for a hereditary kingship expressed in the time of Samuel (1 Sam. 8:5) was only natural. If Israel was to achieve its

aim, it must remain in permanent possession of the country; and in order to do so it needed unity, continuity of leadership, and stable government. This eventuality had been foreseen by Moses, who laid down the principles according to which kings should rule (Deut. 17:14–20).

While under Saul the kingdom remained weak, owing to the young king's inexperience and immaturity of character, under David, an indefatigable warrior and an able politician, it was built up into a formidable empire. It was not comparable with the empires on the Nile and the Euphrates, but was nevertheless impressive, controlling as it did most of the nations of Palestine and Syria. Built by David's genius under the blessing of God, assisted by the weakness of the other great nations of his time, the empire of Israel remained intact for about half a century. Weaknesses became apparent even under Solomon's generally peaceful rule, and his kingdom broke to pieces when death removed his strong hand.

Of permanent value, however, aside from the memory of a glorious past under two great kings, was the establishment of Jerusalem as a religious and political center for the nation. Its very name, "city of peace," has exerted a magic influence on the minds of Hebrew people of all generations. Inasmuch as promises of the coming of Messiah were connected by Inspiration with the royal house of David, the idea of a God-appointed and God-guided kingship was never lost sight of.

**Saul (c. 1050–1011 b.c.).**—Saul, the son of the Benjamite, Kish, a man chosen by God for his deeply religious nature (1 Sam. 10:7, 10, 11; 14:37), his humility (1 Sam. 10:22), and a tendency to be generous (1 Sam. 11:13), was first secretly anointed by Samuel (1 Sam. 10:1), proclaimed king at Mizpeh (1 Sam. 10:17–24), and confirmed in office at Gilgal after his successful rescue of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11). His kingdom consisted of a rather loose union of tribes, who followed him as king in times of emergency, but who otherwise decided their own affairs without interference from a central government. Early in his reign his office differed little from that of a judge. Among other things he still took care of his own cattle, even after he had been proclaimed king.

Nevertheless, the idea of a real kingship was gradually developing. Saul planned that his kingship should be hereditary. He erected a castle on the site of his capital, "Gibeah of Saul," now *Tell el-Fûl*, 4 mi. (6.4 km.) north of Jerusalem. His two-story citadel, measuring 170 by 114 ft. (51.8 by 34.7 m.), with outer walls 6 to 7 ft. (1.8 to 2.1 m.) thick, has been excavated by W. F. Albright. With its fortified walls and corner towers, it represents typical Hebrew construction of the time. The largest hall, probably the audience chamber where David played his lyre before the king, was 7 by 25 ft. (2.1 by 7.6 m.).

Furthermore, Saul created the first, though small, standing army maintained by Israel. It consisted of 3,000 men, situated in 3 garrison cities (1 Sam. 13:2), with his uncle, or perhaps cousin, Abner, as commander in chief (1 Sam. 14:50).

On the throne during the difficult period when the Philistines, by virtue of their superior weapons and military experience, tried to subjugate the Hebrews, the new king often found himself fighting against them, as well as against other nations. The first proof of his generalship was given in his rescue of the Transjordan city of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites (1 Sam. 11:1–11). Successful wars were also fought against the

Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:4–8) and the Edomites in the south, the Moabites in the east, and the Aramaeans of the Syrian state of Zobah (1 Sam. 14:47).

The lifelong threat to Israel's existence, however, came from Philistia (1 Sam. 14:52), which maintained garrisons in various Hebrew cities, even in some close to Saul's capital. The Philistines had a monopoly on the manufacture and sharpening of weapons and tools, so that at one time in all Israel only Saul and Jonathan possessed iron weapons (1 Sam. 13:19–22). They terrorized the Hebrews so much that the latter were habitually forced to seek refuge in caves and inaccessible mountain retreats (v. 6).

The first great Israelite victory over the Philistines, one that resulted in their expulsion from the eastern hill country, was more a military episode than a real battle. When the Philistines had occupied the hills of Benjamin and taken Michmash, the Israelites retreated in disorder (vs. 5–11). Michmash lies 7 mi. (11.5 km.) north of Jerusalem at an altitude of about 2,000 ft. (610 m.), overlooking the deep gorge of the *Wadi eṣ-Ṣuwenîṭ* to the south, which formed the pass of Michmash. While Saul was camped with 600 men at Geba, separated from the Philistines by the *Wadi eṣ-Ṣuwenîṭ*, Jonathan and his armor-bearer climbed down the Rock Seneh on which Geba was built, crossed the wadi, and then climbed the steep Rock Bozez, on which the Philistines were encamped at Michmash (1 Sam. 13:15, 23; 14:4, 5). In the Philistine camp Jonathan's surprise attack created confusion which was increased by the Hebrews who came to Jonathan's aid, with the result that the Philistines fled in panic (1 Sam. 14:11–23).

The first major encounter between the Hebrews and the Philistines during Saul's reign took place in the western hill country between Shochoh and Azekah, about halfway between Jerusalem and Ashkelon. David's victory over Goliath on this occasion marked the beginning of a great series of victories over the hated Philistines. The chief results were increased liberty for the Hebrews and considerable wealth realized from the loot of the Philistines (1 Sam. 17).

Unfortunately for the nation and the royal house, Saul possessed an undisciplined character that became overbearing as a result of his successes. Because of his violation of the Levitical law and of divine orders he lost both the kingship and his own sanity. His last years—we know not how many—were spent under the shadow of insanity, which in turn led to the persistent attempt to kill David, who he knew was destined to be his successor. Having lost the friendship and guiding hand of his old counselor Samuel (1 Sam. 15:17–23, 35), he committed some of the most foolish and atrocious crimes, such as slaughtering the innocent priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22:11–21) and attempting to kill his own son Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:30–33). Known for his zeal in uprooting spiritism, he finally appealed to a witch for counsel the day before his death (1 Sam. 28:3–25).

At a battle fought in the mountains of Gilboa, at the eastern end of the plain of Esdraelon, Saul and his sons lost their lives fighting against the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:1–6). This battle was so disastrous that all the gains of Saul's long reign were lost to the Philistines, who once more occupied the cities of Israel and drove the panic-stricken inhabitants to their former mountain retreats (v. 7).

**David (1011–971 B.C.).**—After Saul's death, David was crowned king over Judah at Hebron (2 Sam. 2:3, 4). He had in times past been a captain in Saul's army, and was at one time Saul's son-in-law (1 Sam. 18:27), but had lived as an outcast in the forests and mountain caves of southern Judah, and in a Philistine city during the last years of Saul's reign (1 Sam. 19 to 29). David, who had been anointed secretly by the prophet Samuel

soon after Saul's rejection as king, was exceptionally gifted as a warrior, poet, and musician (1 Sam. 17; 2 Sam. 1:17–27; 1 Sam. 16:14–23). He was also deeply religious, and although he fell into gross sin, he knew how to repent and regain divine favor (see Ps. 51). Hence, kingship was confirmed in perpetuity to him and his posterity, to culminate in the eternal kingship of the Messiah, who was a descendant of David after the flesh (Rom. 1:3).

The first seven years of David's reign were confined to Judah, while Ish-bosheth, Saul's fourth son, ruled over the remainder of the tribes from his capital, Mahanaim, in Transjordan. Relations between the two rival kings were bitter, and exploded in strife and bloodshed (2 Sam. 2:12–32). Saul's army commander, Abner, was the real power behind the throne of Ish-bosheth, a weakling who fell victim to assassins immediately after the withdrawal of Abner's support (2 Sam. 3 and 4). His real name seems to have been Esh-baal, "man of Baal" (1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39), which suggests that when he was born Saul had departed so far from God that he worshiped Baal. For the inspired writer of 2 Samuel this name was so shameful that he never used it, consistently choosing, rather, to call Esh-baal, "man of Baal," Ish-bosheth, "man of shame."

David had made Hebron his capital and was there crowned king over all Israel after Ish-bosheth's death, which marked the end of Saul's brief dynasty. After David had reigned for seven and a half years he set out to establish a new capital. He demonstrated remarkable political wisdom by selecting as a capital a city that had thus far belonged to no tribe, and hence would be acceptable to all. By conquering the Jebusite fortress of Jerusalem, on the border between Judah and Benjamin, and by establishing the political and religious center of the kingdom in a central location, yet off the main international highways running through the country, David showed commendable political foresight. Ever since that time Jerusalem has been an important city, and has played a distinctive role in the history of the world.

David's reign is distinguished by an unbroken chain of military victories. He defeated the Philistines repeatedly (2 Sam. 5:17–25; 21:15–22; 23:13–17) and was able to free Israel completely from their influence. He limited them to the coastal area surrounding the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron. He also subjugated the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites (2 Sam. 8:2, 14; 10:6 to 11:1; 12:26–31; 1 Chron. 18:2, 11–13; 19:1 to 20:3), and made the Aramaeans of Damascus and Zobah tributary (2 Sam. 8:3–13; 1 Chron. 18:5–10). Other nations sought his friendship by sending gifts—such as the king of Hamath (2 Sam. 8:9, 10)—or by signing treaties—such as the Phoenician king of Tyre (2 Sam. 5:11). In this way David was able to rule over all western and eastern Palestine, with the exception of the coastal region, and indirectly over great parts of Syria as well. Practically all the territory between the Euphrates and Egypt either was administered by David's governors or was friendly or tributary to him.

David's domestic policies were not always so successful as his foreign policies. For tax purposes or for an assessment of the potential man power of his kingdom, he had a census taken that Joab, his general—as well as God—resented (2 Sam. 24; 1 Chron. 21 and 22). David, as some other strong political rulers before and after him, also occasionally fell victim to his lusts—see for example the Bathsheba episode (2 Sam. 11:2 to 12:25)—and as a polygamist shared the unfortunate results of this custom. One of his sons committed incest (2 Sam. 13), another, Absalom, became a fratricide and later revolted against his own father but died in the ensuing battle (2 Sam. 13 to 19). The rebellion of



the Benjamite Sheba also caused serious trouble and bloodshed (2 Sam. 20); and shortly before David's death Adonijah, one of his sons, made an unsuccessful attempt to gain the throne by a palace revolution (1 Kings 1). The strong personality of David, together with the unflinching support of those who were loyal to him, managed to overcome all divisive forces. The kingdom was transferred to Solomon as a strong unit.

David's fundamental loyalty to God and his willingness to repent and accept punishment for sin gained for him the respect of the prophets Nathan and Gad, and brought divine promises and blessings of a singular nature. One of his great desires, to build a temple to the God he loved, was not realized. However, he was promised that his son, whose hands were not bloodstained as his were, would build the Temple. Hence, David bought the land for it, had a design made, and collected the funds, by way of assisting Solomon in carrying out the plan (2 Sam. 7; 1 Chron. 21:18 to 22:5).

**Solomon (971–931 B.C.).**—Solomon, the third ruler of the united kingdom of Israel, whose name was also Jedidiah, "beloved of Jehovah" (2 Sam. 12:24, 25, seems to have followed the Oriental custom of taking a throne name, Solomon, "peaceable." His reign made this title not only appropriate but popular.

For reasons not stated God chose Solomon to be David's successor and David proclaimed him king during the course of a palace revolution aimed at placing his older son Adonijah on the throne (1 Kings 1:15–49). Although Solomon at first seemed to show clemency toward Adonijah, he did not forget the incident. Usually the slightest mistake Solomon's opponents made cost them their lives. Hence, Joab, instigator of the plot, and Adonijah were both eventually executed, while Abiathar, the high priest, was deposed (1 Kings 2).

Demonstrating unusual piety in early life, Solomon asked God for wisdom in the difficult task of ruling the new empire, the extent of whose political problems he seemed to realize. His wisdom, of which examples occur in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, exceeded that of all other famous sages of antiquity (1 Kings 3:4 to 4:34). This fame attracted intellectuals of various nations to Solomon's court, of whose visits that of the Arabian queen of Sheba seems to have made the greatest impression on contemporaries (1 Kings 4:34; 10:1–10).

The kingdom Solomon inherited from his father extended from the Gulf of Aqabah in the south almost to the Euphrates in the north. Never before or after was Israelite territory so extensive. Since Assyria and Egypt were both very weak at this time, Solomon met no real opposition from his neighbors; and taking advantage of this situation, he ventured forth on great trading enterprises by land and sea that brought him wealth never before seen by his people. Hence, the splendor of his reign became legendary, as Matt. 6:28, 29 testifies.

Since the Phoenicians already controlled Mediterranean trade, Solomon turned southward and developed commercial enterprises with Arabia and East Africa, carrying out his maritime expeditions with the help of Tyrian sailors (1 Kings 9:26–28). The city of Ezion-geber at the head of the Gulf of Aqabah served not only as home port for these expeditions but also, apparently, as a commercial center for copper mined in the Wadi Arabah (the area between the Dead Sea and Ezion-geber). Since Solomon also controlled numerous overland trading routes, Israel became the great clearing house for Egyptian chariots and linen, Cilician horses, and the various products of Arabia. Practically

nothing entered Egypt from the east, or Mesopotamia from the southwest, without enriching Solomon's coffers (1 Kings 4:21; 10:28, 29).

The king was also engaged in vast building enterprises. On Mt. Moriah, north of old Jerusalem, he built an acropolis comprising the magnificent Temple, erected in 7 years (1 Kings 6:37, 38), and his own palace, which was 13 years in building (1 Kings 7:1). He also built the *millō*, or "filling," thought by some to have been between Zion and Moriah, and repaired the wall of Jerusalem (1 Kings 9:15, 24). A chain of chariot cities was built throughout the country to guarantee its safety, and this required a large standing army and many horses and chariots—both costly items in the national budget (1 Kings 4:26; 9:15–19; 2 Chron. 9:28). Excavations at Gezer and Megiddo have thrown light on these Biblical records.

For his manifold enterprises the king depended on forced labor (1 Kings 5:13–18; 9:19–23), and on Phoenicians for skilled workmen and mariners (1 Kings 7:13; 9:27). The magnificent building projects and the vast requirements of the army put such a strain on Israelite economy that even Solomon's immense revenue proved insufficient to finance the program, with the result that at one time he had to cede 20 Galilean towns to Phoenicia in payment for needed timber and gold (1 Kings 9:10–14).

Following the custom of Oriental monarchs, Solomon had a large harem, and attempted to foster international good will by marrying princesses from most of the surrounding nations, including the Egyptians, and by permitting shrines dedicated to foreign deities (1 Kings 11:1–8) to be built in Jerusalem. The Egyptian princess, who brought as her dowry the city of Gezer, which her father had conquered from the Canaanites, seems to have been his favored queen inasmuch as he built her a separate palace (1 Kings 3:1; 9:16, 24).

But the outward glory of the kingdom, the sumptuous court ceremonial, the strong new fortresses throughout the country, the powerful army, and the great trading enterprises could not hide the evident fact that Solomon's empire was ready to fall apart. There was unrest among the Israelites, because of high taxes and forced labor requirements, and among the subjugated nations, which were only waiting for a sign of weakness to break loose from Jerusalem. Although only three rebels are mentioned by name in the Bible, Hadad the Edomite, Rezon the son of Eliadah, and the Ephraimite Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:14–40), who came out openly in opposition to Solomon, events that occurred immediately upon Solomon's death imply that there must have been considerable unrest even during his lifetime.

Bible writers, who were more concerned with the religious life of their heroes, give as the main reason for the decline of Solomon's power and the breakup of his empire, the king's departure from the straight path of religious duty. Although he had built the Temple of Jehovah and at its dedication offered a prayer that reflected deep spiritual experience (1 Kings 8:22–61), he nevertheless fell into unprecedented polygamy and idolatry (1 Kings 11:9–11) that led to the adoption of foolish policies and so hastened the fall of his kingdom.

No sooner had Solomon closed his eyes than the tribes of Israel broke into two factions and several of the subject nations proclaimed their independence.

## **XII. The Kingdom of Judah 931—609 B.C. and of Israel 931—722 B.C.**

[For a discussion of the principles on which the chronology of this period is based, see pp. 135–151; see also p. 94. For a table of dates, see next page.]

**The Kings of Judah; Rehoboam (931–913 B.C.).**—With Rehoboam, Solomon's rash son, the united Hebrew kingdom came to a close, never to be revived. When Rehoboam went to Shechem for the coronation he learned of deep-seated grievances among his subjects over the excessive tax burdens and the forced labor his father had introduced. Rejecting the advice of experienced counselors to accede to the reasonable demands of the people, he threatened to increase their burdens and thereby provoked an open revolt of his northern and eastern subjects under the leadership of Jeroboam, who, on hearing of Solomon's death, had returned from exile (1 Kings 12:1–20).

Although he heeded the counsel of the prophet Shemaiah, not to fight his brothers at the time of the separation of the ten tribes, Rehoboam apparently fought several bloody wars with Jeroboam at a later time (1 Kings 12:24; 14:30). Also, in his fifth year he experienced the historic attack of Sheshonk (Shishak) I of Egypt (1 Kings 14:25–28), concerning which Sheshonk's victory relief on the temple wall at Karnak still bears witness. This attack may account for the fact that the king of Judah strengthened the fortifications of a number of towns which guarded the roads leading to Jerusalem (2 Chron. 11:5–12).

Being, probably, the son of an Ammonite woman, Rehoboam followed his father in having a large harem and in promoting the worship of pagan gods, with all their abominable rites (1 Kings 14:22–24; 2 Chron. 11:21).

#### TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

| Egypt                                    | Judah                                                       | Israel                          | Assyria                     |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Libyan<br/>Dynasties,<br/>950–750</i> | (Saul, 1050–1011; David,<br>1011–971; Solomon, 971–<br>931) |                                 |                             |
| <i>Twenty–<br/>second<br/>Dynasty</i>    | Rehoboam                                                    | 931– Jeroboam I 931–910<br>913  | shur–dan II 933–<br>910     |
|                                          | Abijam                                                      | 913–<br>911                     |                             |
| Sheshonk<br>I                            | Asa                                                         | 911– Nadab 910–909<br>869       | dad–nirari II 910–<br>889   |
| Osorkon I                                |                                                             | Baasha 909–886                  | ukulti–Ninurta 889–<br>884  |
| Takelot I                                |                                                             | Elah 886–885<br>Zimri 885       |                             |
| Osorkon II                               | <i>Twenty–<br/>third<br/>Dynasty</i>                        | Omri 885–874                    | shurnasirpal II 884–<br>859 |
|                                          | Pedubast                                                    | (Tibni 885–880)                 |                             |
| Sheshonk II                              | Sheshonk IV                                                 | Jehoshaphatt 872–<br>848*       | halmaneser III 859–<br>824  |
| Takelot II                               | Osorkon III                                                 | Jehoram 854–<br>Ahaziah 853–852 |                             |

|                                        |                                     |            |          |             |          |                     |          |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|----------|-------------|----------|---------------------|----------|
|                                        |                                     |            | 841*     |             |          |                     |          |
| Sheshonk III                           | Takelot III                         | Ahaziah    | 841      | Joram       | 852-841  |                     |          |
| Pami                                   | Amenrud                             | Athaliah   | 841-835  | Jehu        | 841-814  | hamshi-Adad V       | 824-810  |
| Sheshonk V                             | Osorkon IV                          | Joash      | 835-796  | Jehoahaz    | 814-798  | dad-nirari III      | 810-782  |
|                                        |                                     | Amaziah    | 796-767  | Jehoash     | 798-782  | emirammiss (regent) |          |
|                                        |                                     | Azariah    |          | Jeroboam II | 793-753* | halmaneser IV       | 782-772  |
| <i>Twenty-fourth Dynasty (of Saïs)</i> | <i>Twentieth Dynasty (Ethioian)</i> | (Uzziah)   | 790-739* | Zachariah   | 753-752  | shur-dan III        | 772-754  |
|                                        |                                     |            |          | Shallum     | 752      | shur-nirari V       | 754-746  |
| 750-715                                | c. 715-663                          | Jotham     | 750-731* | Menahem     | 752-742  | iglath-pileser III  | 745-727  |
| Tefnakht                               | Piankhi                             |            |          | Pekahiah    | 742-740  |                     |          |
| Bocchoris                              | Shabaka                             | Ahaz       | 735-715* | Pekah       | 752-732* |                     |          |
|                                        | Shabataka                           | Hezekiah   | 729-686* | Hoshea      | 732-722  | halmaneser V        | 727-722  |
|                                        | Taharka                             |            |          |             |          | argon II            | 722-705  |
|                                        | Tanutamon                           |            |          |             |          | ennachreib          | 705-681  |
| <i>Twenty-sixth Dynasty 663-525</i>    |                                     | Manasseh   | 697-642* |             |          | sarhaddon           | 681-669  |
| Psamtik I                              | 663-610                             | Amon       | 642-640  |             |          | shurbanipal         | 669-627? |
|                                        |                                     | Josiah     | 640-609  |             |          | shur-etil-ilani     | 627?-?   |
| Necho II                               | 610-595                             | Jehoahaz   | 609      |             |          | in-shar-ishkun      | ?-612M   |
|                                        |                                     | Jehoiakim  | 609-598  |             |          | shur-uballit II     | 612-609  |
|                                        |                                     | Jeohiachin | 598-597  |             |          |                     |          |
| Psamtk II                              | 595-589                             | Zedekiah   | 597-586  |             |          | ABYLON              |          |

Apries 589-570  
(Hophra)

Amasis 570-526

Psamtik 526-525

abopolassar 626-  
605

ebuchadnezzar 605-  
562

### III

NOTE.—The dates of Assyrian kings are generally accepted today as fixed with reasonable certainty within a spring-to-spring year; Ashur-dan II, for example, began to reign at some time between the spring of 933 and the spring of 932; few are more exact than that (on Tiglath-pileser III see p. 60). The dates for Nebuchadnezzar's reign are astronomically fixed. Regnal dates for Egyptian kings of the Twenty-second to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty are unknown, and the dates here given for the various dynasties are only approximate. The first kings of the Twenty-third Dynasty were contemporary with those of the Twenty-second. For the basis of the tentative dating of the reigns of Israel and Judah see p. 135. On Tibni see p. 80; for the names Jehoram and Joram see footnote on p. 78. Regnal years, even those well established, are not given in exact form (as 931/30, etc. see p. 35); hence allow the B.C. year to vary plus or minus 1, unless the text gives specific accession dates.

**Abijam and Asa (913–869 B.C.).**—The next king, Abijam, reigned but briefly (913–911 B.C.), had a war with Jeroboam I, and followed his father in all his vices (1 Kings 15:1–8).

With Asa, Abijam's son, a good king again came to the throne (911–869 B.C.). He removed from influence his grandmother, who had erected an image for Asherah, and banished the male prostitutes as well as idol worship (vs. 10–13). After the first peaceful years of his reign, which he devoted to religious reforms, Asa was attacked by the Ethiopians under Zerah, probably Cushites from the eastern shore of the Red Sea (2 Chron. 14:9–15). When Baasha of Israel occupied part of northern Judah, probably in the 36th year after the division of the kingdom (2 Chron. 16:1), Asa did not dare to meet the northern army with his own inferior forces, but induced Benhadad of Syria to attack and weaken Israel. For this lack of faith in Jehovah's help Asa was severely rebuked by Hanani the prophet (vs. 1–10).

Asa's last years were marked by poor health (v. 12), and accordingly he appointed his son Jehoshaphat as coruler, as the chronological data indicate.

**Jehoshaphat to Ahaziah (872–841 B.C.).**—Jehoshaphat (872–848 B.C.) continued the religious reforms of his good father. Although he failed to remove all the high places, he is credited with having the Levites and priests travel through the country and preach the law (1 Kings 22:43; 2 Chron. 17:7–9). He terminated the long feud between Judah and Israel by allying himself with the dynasty of Omri, and married crown prince Jehoram of Judah to Ahab's daughter Athaliah (2 Kings 8:18, 26), a union that unfortunately opened the door to Baal worship in Judah. Jehoshaphat also assisted the northern kings in their military campaigns. With Ahab he went against Ramoth-gilead (2 Chron. 18:28), and with Joram, king of Israel, against Moab (Kings 3:4–27). He also fought a strong confederacy of Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites (2 Chron. 20:1–30). Some nations, however, such as the Philistines and Arabians, were so impressed with Jehoshaphat's accomplishments that they sought his friendship. His attempt to revive Solomon's Ophir expeditions failed when his ships were wrecked at Ezion-geber (vs. 35–37).

Jehoram (854–841 B.C.), not to be confused with his contemporary, Joram of Israel, was associated on the throne with his father, Jehoshaphat. Nothing good is said of Jehoram. Influenced by his wicked and idolatrous wife, he encouraged Baal worship in

Judah (2 Kings 8:18), fought unsuccessful wars with the Philistines and Arabians (2 Chron. 21:16, 17; 22:1), and died of an incurable disease as Elijah had predicted (2 Chron. 21:12–19).

Ahaziah (841 B.C.) followed the corrupt ways of his parents, joined his uncle Joram of Israel in an unsuccessful war against the Syrians (2 Kings 8:26–29), and was mortally wounded in Jehu's plot against Joram of Israel. He died at Megiddo, where he had fled for recovery (2 Kings 9:14–28).

**The Kings of Israel; Jeroboam I (931–910 B.C.).**—Upon seceding from the dynasty of David, all the tribes except Judah, Benjamin, and Levi summoned Jeroboam, a political exile recently returned from Egypt, whither he had fled from Solomon (1 Kings 12:19, 20). Jeroboam was an Ephraimite chief who had served Solomon as foreman over a gang of workers engaged in building Millo. Resenting Solomon's domestic policies, he had revolted. Encouraged by the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh, he apparently grew bold in his opposition, was probably denounced to Solomon, and consequently fled to Egypt to save his life (1 Kings 11:26–40).

Jeroboam I reigned over the northern kingdom as its first king for 22 years (931–910 B.C.). He made Shechem his first capital, but later transferred it to Tirzah. Tirzah has not as yet been definitely identified, but may have been at the present *Tell el-Fâr'ah*, about 7 mi. (11 km.) northeast of Nablus. Excavations have recently been carried out at this mound, which is larger than that of Megiddo, but definite clues as to its identification have not yet been found.

Jeroboam had to fight continual wars with his dissatisfied southern neighbors, first against Rehoboam and then against Abijam (1 Kings 14:30; 15:7). His land seems also to have been devastated during Sheshonk's campaign, although the Bible mentions only Judah and Jerusalem as the victims of attack. However, the evidence shows clearly that Sheshonk also invaded the northern kingdom as well, for he inscribed the names of many northern cities on his Karnak relief. Also a fragment of a victory stele of Sheshonk was discovered in the ruins of Jeroboam's city of Megiddo. Jeroboam may not have kept his promises to Sheshonk and thus have invited this military action that was undertaken against him. Otherwise it is not clear why Sheshonk, who had given asylum to Jeroboam as a political refugee, so quickly turned against him once he had become king.

For political reasons Jeroboam introduced religious rites and practices that represented a departure from the pure worship of Jehovah. At Bethel and Dan he built temples and made young bulls to represent Jehovah in visible form (1 Kings 12:27–31). For two centuries the worship of these golden calves became known as the "sin of Jeroboam." Of all but three of his successors on the throne of Israel, it is said that they followed him in this apostasy. An inscribed potsherd found at Samaria throws a curious light on this calf worship. It contains the personal name of a man called Egeljau, meaning "Jehovah is a calf," showing that the Israelites worshiped Jehovah under the form of a young bull, just as the Canaanites thought their god El to be a bull.

Jeroboam also changed the principal festival month, the seventh of the Hebrew ecclesiastical calendar, to the eighth (vs. 32, 33). From a study of Israelite chronology it would also seem that a civil calendar was introduced at this time, which began in the spring, in contrast to the one in use in the southern kingdom, where the civil year began in the autumn. Since the southern kings used the accession-year system in reckoning their

regnal years, Jeroboam introduced the Egyptian nonaccession-year system, probably for no other reason than to be different.

Jeroboam, who began his reign as a rebel against Rehoboam, and also revolted against God and His ordained mode of worship, built his kingdom on the weakest possible foundation. This was true in a political as well as a spiritual sense. Neither his dynasty, which came to an end with the death of his son, nor any of the succeeding dynasties lasted for more than a few years. The kingdom of Israel had 10 dynasties and 20 kings in the 208 years of its existence. Moreover, the nation never escaped from the religious impasse into which Jeroboam had led it. Sinking deeper and deeper into the mire of idolatry and pagan immorality, it was chewed up piecemeal by its enemies, Syria and Assyria, and eventually vanished.

**Nadab to Zimri (910–885 B.C.).**—The wicked reign of Nadab, Jeroboam's son (910–909 B.C.), was cut short when he was murdered by Baasha in the Philistine town of Gibbethon. Thus ended the first dynasty (1 Kings 15:25–29). This fearful precedent was repeated again and again, until ten different dynasties had reigned over Israel. Baasha (909–886 B.C.) continued to harass Judah, but lost the territory he acquired when he was attacked by Benhadad of Damascus, upon receipt of a bribe from Asa, king of Judah (1 Kings 15:16 to 16:7). Baasha's dynasty ended like the preceding one. His son Elah (886–885 B.C.) was murdered by Zimri, one of his generals, in his capital Tirzah after a reign of less than two years (1 Kings 16:8–10). Zimri made use of his short reign of only seven days by killing all the relatives and friends of Baasha. Then Omri, another general of Elah who was proclaimed king by the Israelite army then engaged in a campaign against the Philistines, marched against Tirzah and took the city. Realizing that resistance was futile, Zimri refused to surrender to Omri, but set fire to the palace and perished in its flames (vs. 11–18).

**Omri (885–874 B.C.).**—Omri became the founder of a dynasty, four kings of which occupied the throne over a period of 44 years (885–841 B.C.). At first Omri had to fight another contender for the throne, Tibni, who had a considerable following among the people. It was only after four years of internal strife that Omri was able to exterminate Tibni and his followers (vs. 21–23). This is apparent from the chronological statements in vs. 15, 23, which assign the 7 days of Zimri's reign to Asa's 27th year, and Omri's accession to the throne—as sole ruler—in Asa's 31st year.

Omri's reign of 12 years was politically more important than the Bible records indicate. By selecting a strategic site for his capital, Samaria, he did for Israel what David had done in the selection of Jerusalem. This hill, 400 ft. high, was situated in a cuplike plain and could easily be defended. It was apparently never taken by force of arms, and surrendered only for lack of water or food. Excavation has verified the fact intimated in the Biblical records that the site had been uninhabited before the time of Omri. Transferring his capital to this site, he began building extensive defenses that were completed by his son Ahab.

Whether Omri personally had encounters with the Assyrians is unknown, but for the next 100 years the Assyrian records refer to Israel as “the land of the house of Omri,” even long after Omri's dynasty had vanished. His personality, political success, or business enterprises must have made him famous in the eyes of contemporaries and later generations.

Omri established cordial relations with his Phoenician neighbors, and married his son Ahab to Jezebel, daughter of the king of Tyre. This alliance introduced the worship of Baal and Asherah into Israel to an extent previously unknown (1 Kings 16:25). He also granted economic concessions to Damascus and allowed Syrian traders to have shops in Samaria's bazaars (1 Kings 20:34). Since Israel received similar privileges in Damascus only after a military victory over the Syrians, it seems that Omri was defeated by the Syrians and ceded them certain territory and the economic concessions referred to.

Omri was, however, successful in subduing Moab, as the lengthy inscription on the famous Moabite Stone admits, where Mesha, king of Moab, says, "Omri king of Israel, he afflicted Moab many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land" (see Vol. I, p. 120). How valuable the possession of Moab was for Israel can be seen from the tribute paid by Moab to Omri's son Ahab. It is said to have amounted—probably annually—to "an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool" (2 Kings 3:4).

**Ahab (874–853 B.C.).**—With Ahab, the next king, a weak ruler came to the throne of Israel. He had no strength to resist his strong-willed Phoenician wife, who was determined to make her own religion supreme. By bringing from her homeland to the royal table hundreds of priests and prophets of Baal and Astarte, by introducing the immoral rites of the Canaanite cult system, and by persecuting and killing the worshipers of the true God, Jezebel caused a religious crisis of the first magnitude (1 Kings 18:4, 19). Because of this crisis and because of the fact that some of the greatest spiritual leaders of Old Testament times, Elijah and Elisha, lived and worked in Israel at that time, the Bible devotes much space to Ahab.

Elijah was called of God to fight for the survival of true religion. A long drought of three and a half years, predicted by the prophet as a judgment of Jehovah, saw Ahab's land brought close to economic ruin. The drought came to an end with Elijah's victory over the Baal priests at Mt. Carmel, where a contest between the power of Jehovah and that of Baal was held (vs. 17–40). But so long as Ahab ruled, the pagan cult of Baal flourished. It is remarkable that Ahab did not dare give Baal names to his children—all their known names, Ahaziah, Joram, and Athaliah, contain the abbreviated form of Jehovah. His subjects, however, had few scruples in this matter. Numerous personal names of that and subsequent periods were connected with Baal—Abibaal, Baala, Baalzamar, Baalzakar, and others—as the inscribed potsherds found during the excavation of Samaria show.

Ahab became famous for the "ivory house" he built (1 Kings 22:39; Amos 3:15). Numerous beautifully carved ivory plaques found in the excavation of Samaria reveal that the interior of his palace was probably decorated with ivory. The designs are similar to those found in ivory decorations of Syria and Assyria.

As a warrior Ahab was moderately successful. Twice he defeated the Syrians. Loot from these two victorious wars enriched him tremendously, and won for him economic concessions in Damascus (1 Kings 20:21, 34). Hence, for a time, he became one of the most powerful rulers west of Assyria. When Shalmaneser III advanced into Syria, Ahab joined his former enemies to make common cause against the Assyrians, and mustered the greatest number of chariots of any of the allies. This fact is revealed in Shalmaneser's list of his opponents in the battle at Qarqar, which is preserved on a historic rock inscription on the upper Tigris. The inscription states that of the 3,940 chariots fighting



against the Assyrians 2,000 belonged to Ahab, whereas the other allies had mustered altogether only 1,940. Of the 52,900 foot soldiers Ahab furnished 10,000. When the battle at Qarqar had checked Shalmaneser's advance, Ahab, conscious of his strength, immediately turned against Damascus to regain possession of the Transjordan city of Ramoth-gilead, but lost his life in that battle (1 Kings 22).

**Ahaziah and Joram (853–841 B.C.).**—During the short reign of Ahab's son Ahaziah (853–852 B.C.), who was fully as corrupt as his father before him, nothing important happened except perhaps the abortive expedition to Ophir made in cooperation with Jehoshaphat of Judah (2 Chron. 20:35–37). Since he left no son, Ahaziah was succeeded on the throne by his brother Jehoram (852–841 B.C.). In his time Mesha of Moab revolted. Although a military expedition was undertaken in cooperation with Jehoshaphat of Judah, with disastrous results for Moab, Israel was nevertheless not able to re-establish control of that country, as the Bible record hints (2 Kings 3:4–27) and the inscription of the Moabite Stone claims.

Joram fought several wars against the Syrians. Through the intervention of the prophet Elisha near disasters were twice averted (2 Kings 6 and 7), but Joram's attempt to regain Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians was as much a failure as that experienced by his father, Ahab. Wounded by Hazael of Syria, he went to well-watered Jezreel to recuperate, where he was murdered by his army commander Jehu. The latter proceeded to wipe out the whole family of Omri, including Jezebel, and then usurped the throne himself (2 Kings 8:28, 29; 9:24 to 10:17).

**The Dynasty of Jehu (841–752 B.C.).**—Jehu (841–814 B.C.), who had been anointed by a messenger of Elisha at Ramoth-gilead, not only put an end to the idolatrous dynasty of Omri but eradicated Baal worship as thoroughly as possible. For his righteous zeal in this respect he was commended by the prophet, and a promise was made that his descendants would sit on Israel's throne to the fourth generation (2 Kings 10:30). Accordingly, his dynasty reigned over the country for about 90 years, nearly half the time of the nation's existence. However, Jehu did not break with Jeroboam's calf worship, and his reform was, as a result, incomplete.

Breaking with the policies of his predecessors, Jehu voluntarily became a vassal of Shalmaneser III and paid tribute immediately upon coming to the throne. This event is depicted on the four sides of Shalmaneser's Black Obelisk, now in the British Museum. The Hebrew king—the first of whom a contemporary representation exists—is shown kneeling before Shalmaneser, while his attendants carry as tribute “silver, gold, a golden *saplu*-bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king, [and] wooden *puruhtu*.” (The meaning of the words in italics is still unknown.) Probably Israel reversed its policy toward Assyria in order to secure Assyrian help against Israel's chief enemy, Hazael of Syria.

The 17 years of Jehoahaz' reign (814–798 B.C.) were marked by continual wars against the Syrians, who oppressed Israel first under Hazael and later under his son Benhadad III (2 Kings 13:1–3). The result was that Israel lost much of its territory and its army, so that there remained only 10 chariots, 50 horsemen, and 10,000 foot soldiers (v. 7). A comparison of the 10 chariots of Jehoahaz with the 2,000 of Ahab reveals the great loss of power the kingdom had suffered in 50 years. It is not known who rescued Israel from its sad plight, because the “saviour” of v. 5 is not identified. Either his son Jehoash (see v. 25), or a king of Assyria, or some other person is meant (see on v. 5).

The next king of Israel, Jehoash (798–782 B.C.), was more successful in his wars against the Syrians than his father had been, and in defeating them three times recovered all the territory lost by Jehoahaz (v. 25). Challenged by Amaziah of Judah, he was forced against his will to fight the southern kingdom—the first war in 100 years between the two brother nations. He worsted Judah’s army at the battle of Beth-shemesh, captured the king, and victoriously entered Jerusalem. He broke down part of the city’s defenses, and carried vessels from the Temple, royal treasures, and some hostages to Samaria (2 Kings 14:8–14).

The chronological data require a coregency between Jehoash and his son, Jeroboam II, for about 12 years, the only coregency in Israel for which there is evidence. Political prudence on the part of Jehoash may have led to this measure. Knowing the danger a state experiences when a sudden vacancy on the throne occurs, he probably appointed his son Jeroboam as coruler and successor when he began his wars of liberation against Syria. In this way continuity of the dynasty was assured even if the king should lose his life during one of his campaigns.

Jeroboam’s recorded reign of 41 years (793–753 B.C.) includes 12 years of coregency with his father, Jehoash. Unfortunately, little is known of his apparently successful reign. The Bible devotes only seven verses to his life (vs. 23–29), but they indicate that he regained so much lost territory that his kingdom almost equaled the empire of David and Solomon in extent. With the exception of the territory held by the kingdom of Judah, the extent of his rule was practically the same as that of those great kings. He restored Israelite rule over the coastal and inland regions of Syria, conquered Damascus and Hamath, and occupied Transjordan south to the Dead Sea, which probably means that he made Ammon and Moab tributary to Israel. These tremendous gains were possible only because Assyria was suffering a period of political weakness and was unable to interfere.

Jeroboam II was apparently a strong ruler, but lacked the prudence and foresight of his father. Hence, he made no provision to guarantee continuity of rule, and his kingdom broke up almost immediately after his death. His son, Zachariah, reigned for only six months (753–752 B.C.), and fell victim to the murderous plot of Shallum (2 Kings 15:8–12). Thus ended Jehu’s dynasty, and thereupon the kingdom returned quickly to the political impotence that had characterized it during most of its short history.

#### **The Kingdom of Judah From 841 to 750 B.C., Athaliah to Azariah (Uzziah).—**

The period under discussion covers the history of Judah during the time of the Jehu dynasty in Israel. The end of Azariah’s (Uzziah’s) reign did not come in 750 B.C., but this date marks the approximate beginning of the new Assyrian Empire, when Israel and Judah became fatally involved in the expanding Assyrian conquests. Since Jotham, Azariah’s son, was appointed coruler with his father in 750 B.C., this date is a convenient boundary for this survey of the history of the kingdom of Judah.

When Ahaziah of Judah was slain by Jehu, in 841 B.C., Ahaziah’s mother, Athaliah, seized the throne for six years (841–835 B.C.). A daughter of the cruel and unscrupulous Ahab of Israel, she had “all the seed royal” exterminated in order that her own rule might be assured. However, her henchmen missed the young prince Joash, who was rescued by the high priest Jehoiada and his wife Jehosheba, a sister of the late king (2 Kings 11:1–3).

Joash (835–796 B.C.), having been educated in the home of Jehoiada, was placed on the throne at the age of seven, and Athaliah’s government was overthrown and the wicked queen killed (2 Kings 11:4–21). As long as the young king allowed Jehoiada to

guide his affairs he acted prudently and piously, removing Baal worship and promoting extensive Temple repairs (2 Kings 12:1–16; 2 Chron. 24:1–14). After Jehoiada's death, however, he waxed indifferent, and even had his benefactor's son Zechariah stoned to death for reproving him because of his evil deeds (2 Chron. 24:15–22). When Hazael of Damascus marched against him, he bought himself and his country off with some of the Temple treasures. This act of cowardliness, together with his murder of Zechariah and domestic and religious grievances, apparently resulted in deep-seated opposition to him. He was assassinated by his own servants and buried in the city of David, not in the royal sepulchers (2 Kings 12:17–21; 2 Chron. 24:25).

His son, Amaziah (796–767 B.C.), first of all disposed of the murderers of his father and consolidated his own position. Planning the reconquest of Edom, which had formerly belonged to Judah, he hired 100,000 mercenaries, but later discharged them at the direction of a man of God. With his own Judean forces he gained a victory over the Edomites and conquered the Edomite capital, Sela, probably Petra. Meanwhile the discharged mercenaries plundered the cities of northern Judah. As a result of his victory over the Edomites, Amaziah became overbearing and challenged Jehoash of Israel to fight against him. This unwise move had disastrous results, for Judah practically became a vassal of Israel. Having also turned away from the true God, he lost the confidence of his people. He was assassinated at Lachish (2 Chron. 25:1–28).

Amaziah was succeeded on the throne by his son, Azariah, whose second name—probably a throne name—was Uzziah (790–739 B.C.). His reign is described as upright, successful, and prosperous. He promoted the economic development of the country (2 Chron. 26:10) and raised a large and well-equipped army (2 Chron. 26:11–15). This enabled him to campaign against the Philistines and Arabians (v. 7), and to recover Elath (probably a tell in modern Aqaba) on the Gulf of Aqabah (2 Kings 14:22), as well, probably, as Edomite territory lying between Judah and the gulf. The Ammonites deemed it wise to buy themselves off with gifts (2 Chron. 26:8). During his reign a severe earthquake must have occurred, one that was remembered for centuries as an outstanding event (Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5).

The political weakness of Egypt and Assyria, which had assisted Jeroboam II in making Israel once more a prosperous and powerful nation, had likewise favored Uzziah, with the result that the two kingdoms, combined, possessed approximately the same area in 750 B.C. as that over which David and Solomon had ruled. This was the last period of Hebrew prosperity. The accession of Tiglath-pileser in 745 B.C. and the consequent rebirth of the Assyrian Empire marked the beginning of a rapid decline in power for both Israel and Judah.

<sup>2</sup>

#### **The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel (752–722 B.C.), Shallum to Hoshea.—**

After the assassination of Zachariah of Israel, last king of the powerful and long-lived dynasty of Jehu, a 30-year period of anarchy and political decline followed, bringing the rapid breakup and eventual extinction of the kingdom. Shallum, the murderer of Zachariah, followed his predecessor in death after a reign of only one month (752 B.C.).

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<sup>2</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jos 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

He was in turn assassinated by Menahem (2 Kings 15:8–15). Menahem (752–742 B.C.) was a cruel ruler who put down all opposition to his rule by extremely severe measures (v. 16). That the enormous Syrian territories that Jeroboam II once controlled had by this time been definitely lost is certain, although the fact is not mentioned in the Bible. Recognizing the power of Assyria as something he would not be able to resist, Menahem followed the wisest procedure possible under the circumstances, voluntarily paying enormous sums of tribute in order that he might be left in peace by Tiglath-pileser III. The latter was at that time restoring Assyrian rule to large sections of Syrian territory. Menahem's tribute, levied from the population by a special tax, is mentioned both in the Bible (vs. 19, 20) and in Assyrian records.

Pekahiah, Menahem's son, was able to hold the throne for only two years (742–740 B.C.), when he was assassinated, like so many of Israel's kings before him. His murderer, Pekah, who counted his regnal years from the time of Menahem's accession to the throne, as the chronological data indicate, may have been related either to Jehu's dynasty or to King Shallum, and therefore ignored the two last rulers by including their 12 years of reign as part of his own. Another possible explanation of the problems posed by Pekah's chronological data may be that he ruled over an insignificant part of the country and did not recognize Menahem and Pekahiah as legitimate rulers. Whatever his reasons for usurping their regnal years may have been, it is quite certain that he enjoyed a sole reign of only about eight years (740–732 B.C.).

Pekah discontinued the pro-Assyrian policy of his predecessors and concluded an anti-Assyrian alliance with Rezin II of Damascus and other Syrian rulers. He next moved against Judah to enforce its participation in the anti-Assyrian league. This campaign is known as the Syro-Ephraimite war. Although the confederates did great damage to Judah and annexed some of its territory, they failed to reach their aim. Ahaz of Judah asked and received the assistance of Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, who moved into Pekah's kingdom, occupied the greater part of Galilee and Gilead, and deported the inhabitants of these regions to the east (2 Kings 16:5–9; 15:27–29). He also took the seacoast as far as Philistia. The Assyrian invasion broke the unnatural alliance between Israel and Syria. Tiglath-pileser attacked Syria, conquered Damascus, and captured King Rezin II (732 B.C.). Syria and the conquered parts of Israel were made Assyrian provinces and henceforth were administered by Assyrian governors.

**Hoshea (732–722 B.C.).**—Pekah's unhappy reign ended in disaster at the hand of an assassin, Hoshea, who ascended Israel's throne as its 20th and last king (732–722 B.C.). Tiglath-pileser III claims to have set Hoshea on the throne, and indicates that Pekah's rule was overthrown by his subjects as a result of his disastrous policies. Hoshea paid heavy tribute to Tiglath-pileser in exchange for the right of being tolerated as a vassal king of Assyria. The amount of annual tribute must have been an almost unbearable burden for the little state, which now consisted of but an insignificant portion of the former kingdom, and for this reason Israel revolted. Desperation may have been Hoshea's chief motive in forming a hopeless alliance against Assyria with So, a weak king of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty of Egypt who ruled over part of that land at the time. Shalmaneser V, who had in the meantime succeeded his father, Tiglath-pileser III, on the throne of Assyria, laid siege to Samaria and took that strongly fortified city after three years (2 Kings 18:10). The fall of the city probably occurred in the last year of Shalmaneser V (723–722 B.C.). Sargon II, who claims in much later inscriptions to have

captured Samaria during the first year of his reign, probably had no right to this claim, at least as king. He was apparently Shalmaneser's army commander and may have actually carried out the conquest of the city and the deportation of the 27,290 Israelite captives.

The fall of Samaria marked the end of the northern kingdom of Israel after a tragic history of little more than two centuries. Conceived and born in the spirit of rebellion, it had no chance of survival. Twenty kings with an average rule of 10 1/2 years had sat upon the throne, 7 of them as murderers of their predecessors. The first king had introduced a corrupted worship, setting up idolatrous representations of Jehovah, and all succeeding rulers followed him in this "sin," some adding to it the worship of Baal and Astarte. Had it not been for the tireless ministry of such reformers as Elijah, Elisha, and other prophets, the kingdom of Israel might not have endured as long as it did.

**The Kingdom of Judah From 750–731 B.C., Azariah (Uzziah) to Jotham.**—After a long and successful reign Uzziah contracted leprosy, which came to him as a punishment for having entered the Temple to offer incense (2 Chron. 26:16–20). His son, Jotham, was then appointed coregent (2 Kings 15:5), a wise move to guarantee the continuity of the dynasty. The policy of appointing the crown prince as coregent was followed for more than a century, from Amaziah to Manasseh.

The record of Uzziah's leprosy shows that quarantine was imposed on a victim who contracted that disease, and that even a king was required to submit to enforced isolation during life and was given a separate burial when he died. In 1931 a tablet was found in the collection of the Russian Archeological Museum on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem, which contains the following inscription in Aramaic, "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah—do not disturb" The form of the script shows that the tablet was cut about the time of Christ or a little earlier, probably at a time when Uzziah's bones, for some unknown reason, had been moved to a new resting place.

Jotham (750–731 B.C.), after having ruled for his leprous father for 12 years, in his 16th year appointed his son Ahaz as ruler. Jotham lived but four years longer (see 2 Kings 15:33 cf. v. 30). Like his father, Jotham was a comparatively upright ruler. The three contemporary Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, probably exerted a good influence upon him. He witnessed the abortive invasion by Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel (v. 37), which was probably his reason for appointing Ahaz as coregent, but the major threat to Judah's existence came after this time.

**Ahaz (735—715 B.C.).**—Jotham's son Ahaz remained impassive to the influence of the prophets and worshiped idols. He caused "his son to pass through the fire. . . . And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (2 Kings 16:3, 4). Distrusting and rejecting divine help in the Syro-Ephraimite war (Isa. 7:3–13), he turned to Tiglath-pileser III and bought his aid with treasures taken from the Temple and the palace (2 Kings 16:7, 8). When Tiglath-pileser conquered Damascus, Ahaz appeared in his entourage. In Damascus he became acquainted with the Assyrian mode of worship and proceeded immediately to introduce it into his own kingdom. Hence, he sent from Damascus instructions to Jerusalem to have an Assyrian altar made, like one he had seen there. This new altar replaced the one Solomon had set up for burnt offerings, and was kept in use for some time (vs. 10–16).

Ahaz, like his predecessors, seems to have appointed his son Hezekiah (729–686 B.C.) as coregent when he saw that the kingdom of Judah would probably become involved in trouble with Assyria. For Hezekiah's reign considerable information is available both in

the Bible and from secular sources. The events described in 2 Kings 18 to 20 are paralleled in Isa. 36 to 39 and 2 Chron. 29 to 32. Other information is given in Jer. 26:17–19 concerning messages of the prophet Micah in Hezekiah's time, and the inscriptions of Sargon II and Sennacherib serve as extra-Biblical source material for the two Assyrian campaigns of that period.

**Hezekiah (729–686 B.C.).**—Hezekiah was a good ruler and initiated a series of religious reforms, probably after the death of his wicked father in 715 B.C. For these he was highly commended by the Bible writer (2 Kings 18:3, 4). He also established control over areas of Philistia, strengthened the national defense system, and encouraged trade and agriculture by building warehouses and sheepfolds (2 Kings 18:8; 2 Chron. 32:28, 29). A remarkable technical accomplishment of his reign was the boring of a 1,749-ft. (6,533 m.) tunnel from the well of Gihon in the Kidron Valley to a lower pool inside the city of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:4, 30; 2 Kings 20:20). In this way he assured Jerusalem of a continuous supply of water. Even now, after more than 2,500 years, the waters of Gihon still flow through this tunnel into the Pool of Siloam.

In 1880 boys wading through the tunnel accidentally discovered a Hebrew inscription, now in the Archeological Museum at Istanbul, which had been cut into the rock after the completion of the tunnel. It reads as follows:

“[The tunnel] was bored. And this was the manner in which it was cut. While [the workmen were] still [lifting up] axes, each toward his neighbor, and while three cubits remained to be cut through, [there was heard] the voice one calling the other, since there was a crevice in the rock on the right side [and on the left]. And when the tunnel was bored, the stonecutters struck, each to meet his fellow, ax against ax; and the water flowed from the spring to the pool for 1,200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the heads of the stonecutters was 100 cubits.”

Hezekiah, however, is best known for his faith in Jehovah at the time of one of Sennacherib's invasions of Judah, which resulted in the miraculous destruction of a vast Assyrian army. Hezekiah had inherited the Assyrian vassalship from his father, but while the Assyrian kings were busily engaged in Mesopotamia, Hezekiah strengthened his defenses in the hope of shaking off the Assyrian yoke, with the help of the Ethiopian kings of the Twenty-fifth Egyptian Dynasty. The prophet Isaiah was vehemently opposed to such a policy (Isa. 18:1–5; 30:1–5; 31:1–3), but proved unable to change Hezekiah's mind. The king was determined to break with Assyria whatever the results might be, and accordingly severed his connections with the empire. As a result he experienced several Assyrian invasions.

The first invasion of Palestine, by Sargon II, was not accompanied by serious results, however. Judah lost nothing more than its coastal region. Isaiah in the meantime walked the streets of Jerusalem and solemnly but unsuccessfully proclaimed his prophecies against Egypt and all her allies (Isa. 20). The first great blow came in 701 B.C., when Sennacherib invaded Palestine. His army went through the land like a steam roller, leaving in its path only destruction and ruin. Too late, Hezekiah reversed his policy and sent tribute to Sennacherib at Lachish. Sennacherib, however, demanded the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. That he did not take the city is attested by his own words, which claim no more than that he laid siege to it. Events elsewhere in his vast domain apparently became more pressing, with the result that he lifted the siege and returned to Assyria.

The sickness of Hezekiah, described in 2 Kings 20, must have occurred about the same time as the Assyrian invasion of his 14th year, 15 years before his death (2 Kings

18:13; 20:6; 18:2). That Isaiah, when promising Hezekiah healing, assured him also that the city would not be taken (2 Kings 20:6) implies that the sickness came shortly before Sennacherib's campaign. This explains also why Hezekiah was so friendly to the messengers of Merodach-baladan (Marduk-apal-iddina), the exiled king of Babylon, who, as a sworn enemy of Assyria, Hezekiah probably considered a welcome potential ally in his struggle for independence. Isaiah, however, who had warned against an alliance with Egypt, was as much opposed to one with Babylon's king in exile.

About ten years later, when Taharka of Egypt had come to the throne, Sennacherib returned to Palestine to force a showdown with the defiant Hezekiah. Sennacherib first dispatched a letter calling upon Hezekiah to surrender. The king of Judah, encouraged by Isaiah, refused this demand and saw his faith in Isaiah's sure promise of divine intervention rewarded. The great Assyrian army met with dreadful disaster before the gates of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 and 2 Kings 19).

**Manasseh to Josiah (697—609 B.C.).**—The last 15 years of Hezekiah's life were probably occupied in rebuilding his devastated country. Some 10 years before his death he made his son Manasseh coregent as the chronological data indicate. Manasseh's long reign of 55 years (697–642 B.C.) was filled with wickedness. He rebuilt the altars to Baal, served Astarte, used witchcraft, sacrificed little children, and “worshipped all the host of heaven” (2 Chron. 33:1–10). The Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal mention Manasseh as their vassal. At some time during his reign he must have rebelled, for one of these two Assyrian kings “bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon” (v. 11). Although it seems somewhat strange that he was taken to Babylon instead of to Nineveh, it should be remembered that the Assyrian kings of this time considered Babylon their second capital. Manasseh's offense cannot have been very serious, for he was pardoned and restored to his former position (vs. 12, 13). Assyrian officials had in the meantime administered the country and probably looted it thoroughly. That Manasseh, upon his return from Babylon to Judah, found an extremely impoverished country, is apparent from a document of that time wherein it is noted that the country of Ammon paid a tribute of 2 minas of gold, Moab, 1 mina of gold, while poor Judah paid only 10 minas of silver. The troubles Manasseh experienced at least had the advantage of bringing him to the point of conversion (vs. 12–20).

His son Amon (642–640 B.C.) was fully as wicked as Manasseh had been before his conversion, with the result that his servants killed him after a brief reign of two years (2 Kings 21:19–26; 2 Chron. 33:21–25).

Amon's young son, Josiah (640–609 B.C.), ascended the throne upon the assassination of his father. Being religiously inclined, he introduced a number of reforms, beginning at the young age of 15 or 16 years to abolish high places, sacred pagan pillars, and Baal altars (2 Chron. 34:3). During repair work on the Temple in Josiah's 18th regnal year (623–622 B.C.) the “book of the law” (see PK 392) was found. Becoming familiar with its precepts, he inaugurated a thorough purge of paganism and idolatry throughout the kingdom of Judah and in adjacent areas of the former kingdom of Israel (2 Kings 22 and 23; 2 Chron. 34:6, 7). This indicates that he had established some kind of political control over territory that had, since 722 B.C., been an Assyrian province. Through the impotence of Assyria after Ashurbanipal's death in 627 (?) B.C., and the rapid disintegration of the Assyrian Empire, the former territory of the ten tribes seems to have fallen into Josiah's lap like an overripe apple. He applied his power and influence to secure religious reforms

throughout Palestine, and might have succeeded except for his untimely death. In view of the fact that the last years of Josiah's life coincided with the emergence of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, they will be sketched in Section XV of this article.

This short survey of Judah's history during the time of the new Assyrian Empire, from Azariah's last years to Josiah, reveals a sad picture. Although Judah was spared the tragic fate that befell the northern kingdom, the country was bled white of all its resources by Assyria's heavy demands for tribute. In Hezekiah's time a glorious and miraculous deliverance was experienced, but even then a terrible price was paid for previous political blunders, and Judah found itself devastated from one end to the other. Only Jerusalem had escaped destruction. The writers of the Bible, who viewed the political history of their nation in the light of faithfulness or disobedience to God, show how the many misfortunes that came to Judah were the result of apostasy. Since half the number of kings reigning during this period were unfaithful to God, it is not surprising that the nation did not fare well.

### **XIII. Egypt in the Saïte Period, Twenty-sixth Dynasty (663–525 B.C.)**

This period deals with a political revival of Egypt that continued for nearly one and a half centuries. In contrast to the previous period, when it was ruled by foreigners from the south, Egypt found itself once more independent, governed by Egyptians from the north. Since this dynasty originated in Saïs, it is usually called the Saïte Dynasty.

The history of this period is based to a great extent on Herodotus' account, and therefore lacks exactness in many details. For example, the battle of Carchemish, in which Necho II was severely defeated by Nebuchadnezzar—attested in the Bible and by archeology—is not even mentioned. The reasons for the defects in Herodotus' history lie in the fact that he based his work, not on written records, but on oral information secured during a visit to Egypt about 445 B.C., when the events described lay 80 or more years in the past. Nevertheless, much correct information may be gained from a careful study of Herodotus' reports, which, when sifted and compared with more nearly contemporary sources and with information given in the Bible, permit an approximately reliable reconstruction of the history of the period.

Necho I, a city prince of Saïs, perhaps a descendent of Tefnakht of the Twenty-fourth Dynasty, had been given the title of king by Esarhaddon for taking part in a rebellion against the Assyrians during Taharka's time he was sent to Assyria as a prisoner, but succeeded in regaining the confidence of Ashurbanipal and was restored to his office and throne at Saïs.

**Psamtik I (663—610 B.C.).**—After Necho I had been killed by Tanutamoni, his energetic son Psamtik I turned to the Assyrians for help. When the Ethiopian Dynasty was expelled from Egypt by the Assyrians, Psamtik received the kingship of Memphis as a reward for valuable services rendered during the campaign, and other parts of the country were put under the rulership of various local princes. However, when Ashurbanipal was busily engaged in settling the Babylonian revolt led by his own brother, Psamtik managed through clever moves and without great difficulty to rid himself of Assyrian control. With the help of Gyges of Lydia he took Thebes in 655 B.C., and in 14 years all Egypt was in his hands.

Psamtik established and maintained his rule with the help of mercenary forces. Greeks from the Ionian Islands, Jews from Palestine, Carians from Asia Minor, and others served in his army and manned his fortresses. He favored Greek colonists, and



received an income tax of 20 per cent from the population, but left priests and soldiers tax exempt in order to retain the loyalty of these two most important classes, whose good will an Egyptian king needed. The culture of the time represented an imitation or revival of the classical period. Pyramids of the old kingdom were repaired, ancient titularies were revived, mortuary inscriptions of the pyramids were again copied and carved into tomb walls, and statues and reliefs were executed in the ancient style.

After reuniting Egypt and re-establishing its political independence, Psamtik seems to have played with the plan of rebuilding the Egyptian Asiatic empire of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties. In 640 B.C. he marched into Palestine, where he besieged the Philistine city of Ashdod for years; but the Scythian invasion of that time put an end to his dreams of empire. He was able to buy himself off by a heavy tribute and thereby avoided an invasion of Egypt. Having already overextended their lines of communication, the Scythians seem also to have welcomed Psamtik's conciliatory advances, and were apparently happy to call off the intended invasion without losing face. From Babylonian records it is evident that Egypt assisted Assyria for several years during its last struggle against the Medes and Babylonians. Psamtik apparently wanted to keep Assyria alive as a buffer state against the new powers of the east.

**Necho II (610—595 B.C.).**—When Necho II, Psamtik's son, came to the throne, he pursued his father's policies. He marched north in the spring or summer of 609 B.C. to aid the weak Assyrian forces of Ashur-uballit against the Medes and Babylonians. King Josiah of Judah, apparently an ally of the Babylonians, withstood him near Megiddo and died of wounds received there in battle. Necho's march to the north failed to stave off the end of the Assyrian kingdom, as is implied by the Babylonian Chronicle. However, Necho's army apparently did not suffer a defeat, because three months after the battle of Megiddo he was able from his temporary headquarters at Riblah in Syria to impose a heavy tribute on Judah and to remove Josiah's anti-Egyptian son, Jehoahaz, who was replaced by Jehoiakim, his more pro-Egyptian brother (2 Chron. 35:20–24; 36:1–4). A stele of Necho found at Sidon is also proof that he exercised some degree of control over Phoenicia during those years, while the Babylonian Chronicle records two Egyptian victories over Babylonian garrisons in the year 606/5 B.C.

Having successfully eliminated Assyria, the Babylonians felt they must curtail Egyptian power. The aged and ailing Nabopolassar therefore sent Nebuchadnezzar, the crown prince, against the Egyptian army at Carchemish. In the ensuing battle, fought in the spring or early summer of 605 B.C., the Egyptians were twice beaten, first at Carchemish, and a little later near Hamath. In August, 605 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar was the unchallenged master of all Syria and perhaps also of Palestine, he was ready to invade Egypt. At that time he received the report of his father's death, and immediately returned to Babylonia. This saved Necho and Egypt. Although the Egyptian army, after the defeat at Carchemish, probably never saw the Euphrates again, it remained strong enough to inflict heavy losses on Nebuchadnezzar's army once more in 601 B.C.

Necho is credited with having begun a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea, in which project 120,000 men are said to have perished. He abandoned the work before completion, however, when his engineers convinced him that the Red Sea level was higher than the Mediterranean Sea, and that Lower Egypt would be flooded as soon as the waters of the Red Sea should pour into the finished canal. Recognizing this mistake, Darius I had this canal completed some 80 years later. It was in use for many centuries,

the forerunner of the present Suez Canal. Herodotus tells us that in Necho's time Phoenician sailors accomplished, in three years, the first circumnavigation of Africa.

**Psamtik II (595—589 B.C.).**—Of Psamtik II, Necho's son, not much more is known than that he attempted to reconquer Nubia and that he once visited Palestine (John Rylands Demotic Papyrus, No. IX), probably to organize anti-Babylonian resistance. Jer. 27:3 may refer to the time of this activity, when envoys of different nations were gathered at Jerusalem, only to be warned by Jeremiah of the disastrous results of a revolt against the king of Babylonia.

**Apries (589—570 B.C.).**—Apries, the Biblical Hophra (Jer. 44:30), continued his father's work and actively plotted against Babylon. It was he who encouraged Zedekiah, king of Judah, in his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. He won a naval battle against Tyre and Cyprus, and occupied Sidon. All Phoenicia became subject to him for a short time. Egyptian antiquities found at Arvad, Tyre, and Sidon show how great his influence was throughout the coastal region of Syria. This success made such an impression on the lesser states of Palestine that they put their trust in Egyptian arms and revolted against Babylon. Hophra actually made an attempt to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar's army, but was not able to do more than draw the besieging forces away from Jerusalem temporarily (Jer. 37:5–11).

An Aramaic letter probably written during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar by King Adon of Ashkelon (?) was found a few years ago in Egypt. In this letter Adon told Pharaoh that the Babylonian army was marching along the coast of Palestine toward the south and that it had advanced as far as Aphek. He requested immediate help from Egypt in order to resist.

The pathetic plea of a Palestinian ruler, who, like King Zedekiah, had listened to the false inducements of Egypt and rebelled against the Babylonian overlord, helps us to understand the terrible disappointment the people of Jeremiah's time must have felt when all their hopes were shattered by the inactivity of the Egyptian army, or by the inadequate help it provided them in their fight against the Babylonians. This letter demonstrates how truly were being fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecies, in which he had exhorted the nations surrounding Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar faithfully and warned them of the terrible consequences if they rebelled against him (Jer. 27:2–11).

During the course of a military revolt the army commander Ahmose was proclaimed king of Egypt by the soldiers. Apries, with the loyal section of his army, then fought against Ahmose, but was defeated, taken prisoner, and forced to recognize Ahmose as coregent. Two years later a quarrel broke out between the two rulers, which resulted in another bloody battle and the death of Apries, whom Ahmose gratefully gave a royal burial.

In 568 B.C., not long after Apries' death, Amasis (Ahmose) seems to have been confronted with a serious threat in the form of a military campaign led by Nebuchadnezzar. Unfortunately, the only document recording this event is so badly preserved that we know nothing more than that Nebuchadnezzar marched against Egypt in his 37th regnal year. About three years earlier Ezekiel had prophesied that the Lord would give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as "wages" for his siege of Tyre. Although the result of the campaign of 568 B.C. against Egypt is unknown, it seems certain that Amasis suffered defeat (see Eze. 29:17–20).

For the most part, however, the reign of Amasis (570–526 B.C.) seems to have been peaceful. He was a friend of the Greeks; and Naucratis, the Egyptian city where most of the Greeks resident in Egypt lived, became the chief trading center of the country. With his navy, this Pharaoh held Cyprus, and also concluded treaties with Croesus of Lydia, the Spartans, and, in 547 B.C., with Nabonidus of Babylon against Cyrus of Persia.

After Ahmose's long reign his son Psamtik III (526–525 B.C.) reigned for only a year. In 525 B.C. Cambyses, second king of the Persian Empire, conquered Egypt and deposed Psamtik. The country was then made a Persian satrapy.

#### **XIV. The Neo-Babylonian Empire From 626 to 586 B.C.**

Babylonia had enjoyed a long and illustrious history before the Assyrians became masters of the Mesopotamian valley. The empire of Sargon of Akkad and that of the Amorite king Hammurabi had given a luster to Babylonia that survived the long centuries of political impotence during which the Assyrians ruled over this part of the ancient world. Babylonian language and script, its literature and culture, were considered the classical patterns; and for one reason or another Marduk, the god of the Babylonians, held a magic spell over all Mesopotamian peoples. The Assyrians conquered and occupied Babylonia repeatedly during the centuries of their supreme rule over Mesopotamia, but usually treated that country with respect. It was therefore never completely incorporated into the Assyrian Empire, and always enjoyed a status different from that of other subject nations. Sennacherib dared to destroy the city, but his contemporaries and even many Assyrians considered this such a sacrilegious and blasphemous crime that his son Esarhaddon rebuilt the city as soon as he came to the throne.

This ancient and apparently immortal glory that surrounded Babylon made it possible for the Neo-Babylonian Empire to establish itself quickly in the minds of men after the downfall of the Assyrian kingdom, and gave its memory a luster that long survived its brief life of less than a century.

The establishment of the new Babylonian kingdom by Nabopolassar and his campaigns against Assyria have been discussed on pp. 66, 67, in connection with the breakup of the Assyrian Empire. Since this article deals with ancient history only to 586 B.C., the year of Jerusalem's destruction, the events of the last 45 years of the Babylonian Empire will be discussed in Vol. III of this commentary.

**Sources.**—For reasons not yet entirely clear, few contemporary historical inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire period are known. Many economic texts shed some light on the period, and building inscriptions provide information on the extensive construction activities of the Babylonian monarchs. But no royal annals or display inscriptions yet found have been equal in any way to those of the Assyrian emperors. The deplorable absence of historical inscriptions and the scarcity of chronicles, earlier attributed to Babylonian reluctance to record political or military events, are more likely due to the accidents of preservation and discovery. The Babylonian Chronicle was long known and published in parts. In 1923 and 1956 collections of those from the Neo-Babylonian period were issued (including several hitherto unpublished portions found among the cuneiform tablets of the British Museum). This provides a year-by-year account of political events from Nabopolassar's accession year to the year 11 of Nebuchadnezzar except for a break of seven years in Nabopolassar's reign. The so-called Nabonidus Chronicle, although broken, gives an account of the happenings of a number of years during the reign of the last Babylonian king.

On the whole, however, there are extremely few cuneiform records available for a reconstruction of the history of the new Babylonian period. It is therefore a matter of satisfaction that the Bible contains more detailed records of this period than of any other period of Bible history. The information provided in the books of Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Daniel, added to that found in Josephus' works and that of the available cuneiform records, makes it possible to piece together a fairly clear picture of what happened in this significant period of the ancient world that marked the end of the kingdom of Judah.

**Chronology.**—The chronology of the Neo-Babylonian Empire is fixed. A tablet in the Berlin Museum contains the records of numerous astronomical observations made during the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. When these records were checked by astronomers it became apparent that the phenomena described occurred in the Babylonian calendar year equivalent to 568/567 B.C., spring to spring. Since it is possible in this way to determine the 37th regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar to the exact day, in terms of B.C. dates, it is easy with the help of the tens of thousands of dated business documents of that time to reconstruct the complete reign of this monarch and of the other kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Since the chronology secured in this manner agrees perfectly with the list of Babylonian kings contained in the Canon of Ptolemy, there is no doubt that the chronology of the new empire period is based on solid facts.

**Nabopolassar (626–605 B.C.).**—Events exceptionally favored Nabopolassar, who had been an independent monarch over Babylonia under the last shadow kings of Assyria. He gained all for which Marduk-apal-iddina (Merodachbaladan) had fought hard for many years. He not only established a Babylonian empire under a Chaldean monarchy but also had the joy of seeing Assyria, his greatest enemy, fall in the dust. When Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C., Cyaxares and Nabopolassar divided between themselves the territory of the fallen Assyrian colossus. Thus there fell to the Babylonian king an empire that, nominally at least, reached from the Persian Gulf through Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine, to the borders of Egypt. The Medes were satisfied to receive the northern and Anatolian provinces of the former Assyrian Empire. Furthermore, relations between the two new powers remained cordial and were never disturbed—as far as our incomplete knowledge of that period goes. Their mutual friendship was sealed by a marriage between Nebuchadnezzar, Nabopolassar's son and heir, and the Median princess Amuhia (Amyhia).

The years after the fall of Nineveh were used to consolidate the newly acquired territory and to crush the remnants of the Assyrian kingdom that fought for existence under their king Ashur-uballit II in the region of Haran, aided by Egyptian forces. For several years the Babylonian king gained no decisive victory, though Assyrian strength must have been weakened. By 609 B.C. the Assyrian forces seem to have been completely eliminated, and from that time on are not mentioned any more as military opponents, but King Necho of Egypt had, through his victory over Josiah, come into possession of Judea, and had also occupied Syria and parts of northern Mesopotamia. Since Nabopolassar considered himself the heir to the territories that had belonged to the Assyrian Empire, he could not permit Egypt to remain in possession of the Asiatic territories occupied by Necho. By the end of 606 B.C. Nabopolassar had pacified his Mesopotamian possessions and could pay more attention to the Egyptian menace in the west, where the Babylonian garrison forces were sorely pressed. Since the aged king was

ailing, the crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar, was entrusted with the campaign against the Egyptians. Decisive victories over the Egyptian army were gained first at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and a few weeks later near Hamath in Syria. In the summer of 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar was ready for the invasion of Egypt when news reached him of his father's death on the 8th of Ab (approximately August 15, 605). This led to his immediate return to Babylon and his accession to the throne on Elul 1 (approximately September 7).

**Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 B.C.).**—In Nebuchadnezzar II, Nabopolassar had a worthy successor, and Babylon a successful and illustrious king. He carried out many military campaigns, especially against Judah, as we know from the Bible and from the recently discovered Babylonian Chronicle, and was able to pacify the countries belonging to his empire. Yet, he devoted most of his energies and resources to works of peace. His chief ambition was to make his capital the most glorious metropolis of the world. Tremendous sums of money were spent in building palaces, temples, and fortifications; Nebuchadnezzar could say, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” (Dan. 4:30). A description of the city he built is given in the Additional Note on Daniel 4.

### **XV. The Kingdom of Judah From 609 to 586 B.C.**

**Chronology.** —Fortunately, the chronology of Egypt and Babylonia is well established for the period from Josiah to Zedekiah. Certain Judean regnal dates synchronize with Babylonian dates based on astronomical records (see p. 160); thus the B.C. dating of the kings of Judah (see p. 77) can be established with a high degree of accuracy. The most recently published portion of the Babylonian Chronicle (see p. 99, note) moves five kings of Judah (Manasseh to Jehoiakim) a year earlier than dated in previous printings, but it confirms several key events and yields precise dates for the accessions of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah.

**Josiah's Death, and Jehoahaz.**—In Section XII the history of Judah was traced as far as King Josiah's time. A major part of his reign fell in the years of the disintegration of the Assyrian Empire, when the Assyrians were not strong enough to control their western possessions effectively and Babylonia had not yet taken over these possessions. Josiah took advantage of the situation to extend his influence, perhaps even political control, over considerable parts of the territory that had formerly belonged to the kingdom of Israel, and that had more recently been administered as an Assyrian province.

For a time Josiah profited from the Mesopotamian situation. However, he watched with some apprehension the rebirth of Egyptian power. In view of the fact that Egypt was committed to the policy of preventing the complete collapse of Assyria, Egyptian forces must have traversed Palestine several times during Josiah's reign. Josiah may have felt that Pharaoh had other plans than merely to keep Assyria alive—aspirations of rebuilding the former Egyptian Empire in Asia—and that he proposed to exchange military help with Assyria for political concessions in Syria and Palestine. It is unknown whether Josiah had actually made an agreement with Nabopolassar of Babylon and resisted Necho II in order to aid his Babylonian ally, or whether he took his stand merely on the basis of his conviction that if the Egyptians and Assyrians should defeat the Babylonians, Judah would be forced to submit either to Egypt or to Assyria. One or the other reason must have prompted his unfortunate decision to meet Necho and prevent him from marching north to assist the Assyrians.

The battle took place at Megiddo, in 609 B.C. The date is based on the Babylonian Chronicle (see p. 99, note), which mentions the Egyptians as aiding the Assyrians at Haran in that year. Josiah was mortally wounded (see on 2 Chron. 35:20–24), and defeated Judah had to submit to Egypt. However, at that time Necho hurried on to the north without following up his victory over Josiah. He was more concerned with a decision against Babylonia, since a victory there would give him a free hand in Palestine.

In the meantime Jehoahaz, a 23-year-old son of Josiah, was crowned in Jerusalem by popular demand, though he was not the oldest (2 Kings 23:30, 31). He seems to have been known as one who would follow his father's policies, being probably pro-Babylonian as his father had been, which to Pharaoh-Necho meant that he was anti-Egyptian. After consolidating his position in northern Mesopotamia and Syria, Necho decided to punish Judah for interfering with his plans, and accordingly summoned Jehoahaz before him at Riblah, in Syria. This demand and the fact that Jehoahaz obeyed show clearly that Judah must have suffered heavy losses in the battle of Megiddo, and that the country was powerless to resist Necho, who must by now have considered himself the unquestioned lord of Palestine. Necho took the young king, after he had reigned only three months, and sent him a prisoner to Egypt. In his stead Necho appointed Eliakim, an older brother of Jehoahaz, under the name of Jehoiakim. The new king was apparently known for pro-Egyptian sympathies. A tribute of 100 talents of silver and 1 talent of gold was imposed, and this he exacted from the people (2 Kings 23:32–35).

**Jehoiakim (609—598 B.C.).**—Jehoiakim's 11 years as king (609–598 B.C.) were marked by gross idolatry and wickedness, which hastened Judah's final downfall. The exact opposite of his pious father, he distinguished himself by various godless acts, even murdering a prophet (2 Kings 23:37; Jer. 26:20–23).

Jehoiakim was probably an Egyptian vassal until his third regnal year. In 605 B.C., according to the recently discovered Babylonian Chronicle, Nebuchadnezzar, crown prince of Babylon, was dispatched by his father to fight against the Egyptians in northern Mesopotamia. In two battles, at Carchemish and near Hamath, he decisively defeated the Egyptians, and was able to conquer Syria and Palestine. It must have been while following the defeated Egyptians toward their homeland that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and forced Jehoiakim to become a vassal of Babylon, taking a part of the Temple treasure and certain princes as hostages—among them Daniel and his friends (Dan. 1:1–6). News of his father's death sent Nebuchadnezzar back to Babylon by the shortest possible route to take the throne, leaving in the hands of his generals the prisoners already taken during the campaign, with orders to retreat to Mesopotamia (Josephus *Contra Apion* i. 19). When a king died there was always danger of a revolt at home or of a usurper's attempt to seize the throne. For this reason Nebuchadnezzar did not want his army fighting in faraway Egypt at a time when it might be urgently needed in Babylonia.

Since Nebuchadnezzar found no opposition at home he could immediately return to the task of bringing under full control the western territories that, as the result of the battles at Carchemish and near Hamath, had fallen into his lap. Hence, we find him campaigning in "Hatti-land," as the Babylonians called Syria and Palestine, during each of the following three years. Resistance must have been light, because the only military

action mentioned is the capture and destruction of Ashkelon. His campaigns may have served chiefly to organize the territory and collect the annual tributes.

During these three years of comparative quiet, it would appear that Jehoiakim of Judah remained a loyal vassal of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:1). However, since the annual tribute to Babylon rested heavily upon the land, he felt a strong urge to switch his allegiance to Egypt, which was regaining strength. This directed Nebuchadnezzar's attention toward Egypt, the chief cause of the troubles with his vassals. A battle fought with the Egyptian army in Kislev (Nov.–Dec.), 601 B.C., seems to have ended in a draw, with heavy losses, because the Babylonians withdrew. The records tell us that Nebuchadnezzar remained at home during the following year and built up a new army before venturing out on a new campaign toward the end of 599 B.C. Yet in the meantime he allowed several of his western vassal nations, aided by some of his own troops, to raid and harass Judah (2 Kings 24:2). At that time 3,023 Jews were deported to Babylon (Jer. 52:28). In December, 598, Chaldean troops probably were able to take Jerusalem. Once more Temple treasures were taken to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:7). The king was placed in fetters, to be taken to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:6) and punished for his rebellion. But this plan was apparently not carried out. Jehoiakim seems to have died before he could be deported, either from rough treatment at the hands of the Chaldeans or from natural causes. His body was cast outside the city gates and lay there exposed to heat and cold for several days before it received a disgraceful burial—like that “of an ass” (Jer. 22:18, 19; see also 2 Kings 24:6; 2 Chron. 36:6; Jer. 36:30; Josephus *Antiquities* x. 6. 3).

**Jehoiachin (598/97 B.C.).**—Jehoiakim was succeeded by his 18-year-old son, Jehoiachin, who reigned only three months (598/97 B.C.). It is not known why Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to Jerusalem to take the new king prisoner. In any case the records inform us that Nebuchadnezzar's army, shortly after Jehoiachin's accession, began another western campaign. When Nebuchadnezzar arrived at Jerusalem, Jehoiachin surrendered himself, his mother, and his whole staff on Adar 2 (approximately March 16), 597, a specific date established by the Babylonian Chronicle. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon as hostage and made his uncle, Zedekiah, king in his stead. Also he now transported to Babylonia all the remaining vessels of the Temple treasure, 7,000 soldiers, and all the skilled craftsmen he found. The latter would be useful in his extensive building enterprises. (See 2 Kings 24:8–16.)

Jehoiachin, still considered the king of Judah, was more or less only a hostage in Babylon. This conclusion is based on the fact that there was agitation in Judah and among the captives in Babylon, who expected Jehoiachin to be returned to the throne and the sacred vessels to be brought back (Jer. 28:3, 4; and 29). Since the Jews in Babylon could not date events according to the regnal years of Jehoiachin without offending the Babylonians, they apparently labeled such events—as Ezekiel did—by the years of his captivity (Eze. 1:2; 40:1).

These conclusions find some confirmation in archeological discoveries. Three clay jar handles unearthed at Beth-shemesh and Tell Beit Mirsim (probably Debir) all bear the imprint of the same stamp seal, “Belonging to Eliakim, steward of Jehoiachin.” These finds seem to indicate that Jehoiachin's property had not been confiscated, but that it was administered in his absence by his steward. Furthermore, several tablets found in the ruins of Babylon, dated in the year 592 B.C.—five years after Jehoiachin's surrender—contain lists of food-stuff provided by the royal storehouse for certain persons who were

fed by the king. Among them Jehoiachin is repeatedly mentioned as “king of Judah,” together with five of his sons and their tutor Kenaiah. These facts—that Jehoiachin is called king, that he received 20 times as much ration as any other person mentioned in these records, and that any reference to his imprisonment is lacking—seem to indicate that he was held by Nebuchadnezzar for the time, in anticipation of the day when he should be restored to his throne, if and when conditions in Judah might make such a course of action advisable.

At a later time, either in connection with the incidents described in Jer. 29 or at the time of Zedekiah’s rebellion, Jehoiachin was definitely imprisoned. This imprisonment continued until the 37th year of his captivity, when Nebuchadnezzar’s son, Amel-Marduk, the Biblical Evil-merodach, released and exonerated him (2 Kings 25:27–30). This event, however, falls in the period of the Exile and is therefore not within the limits of this article.

**Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.).**—When Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoiachin’s uncle on the throne of Judah, he changed his name from Mattaniah, “gift of Jehovah,” to Zedekiah, “righteousness of Jehovah.” He probably did this so that this name might be a continual reminder to the king of his solemn oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, by his own God Jehovah (2 Chron. 36:13; Eze. 17:15–19). Zedekiah, however, was a weak character; and although he was sometimes inclined to do right, he allowed himself to be swayed from the right path by popular demands, as the history of his reign clearly shows.

For a number of years—according to Josephus, for eight years (*Antiquities* x. 7. 3)—Zedekiah remained loyal to Babylonia. Once he sent an embassy to Nebuchadnezzar to assure him of his fidelity (Jer. 29:3–7). In his fourth year (594/593 B.C.) he made a journey to Babylon (Jer. 51:59), being perhaps summoned to renew his oath of loyalty or possibly to take part in the ceremonies described in Dan. 3. Later on, being under the constant pressure of his subjects, particularly the princes, who urged him to seek the aid of Egypt against Babylon, Zedekiah made an alliance with the Egyptians (see Jer. 37:6–10; 38:14–28). In doing so he completely disregarded the strong warnings of the prophet Jeremiah. This alliance was probably made after Psamtik II had personally appeared in Palestine 590 B.C. and given all kinds of assurances and promises of help.

Nebuchadnezzar, who had prudently refrained from attacking Egypt, was, nevertheless, not willing to lose any of his western possessions to Egypt. He therefore marched against Judah as soon as Zedekiah’s perfidy became apparent. Taking all cities of the country, he practically repeated what Sennacherib had done a century earlier, systematically devastating the whole land. From this unhappy period come the famous Lachish Letters (see on Jer. 34:7) recently found in the excavations of that city. These letters, written in ink on broken bits of pottery, were sent by an officer in charge of an outpost between Azekah and Lachish to the commandant of the latter fortress. They vividly illustrate the deplorable conditions prevailing in the country at that time, and in many details corroborate statements made by Jeremiah, who lived in Jerusalem then.

The siege of Jerusalem began in earnest on Jan. 15, 588 B.C. (2 Kings 25:1), and lasted until July 19, 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:2; Jer. 39:2), when the Chaldean army finally broke through the walls into the city, where unspeakable famine conditions prevailed. Once the 30-month-long siege was interrupted briefly by the unsuccessful attempt of the Egyptian army to defeat the Babylonians (Jer. 37:5). When the breakthrough came Zedekiah made an attempt to escape. In the confused fighting that followed the



breakthrough he managed to leave the city and reach the plain of Jericho, but was overtaken there. Carried to Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters at Riblah, Zedekiah saw his sons killed; then his eyes were put out and he was sent to Babylon in chains. His chief ministers were executed and all others carried away (2 Kings 25:4–7, 19–21; Jer. 52:10).

Jerusalem was systematically looted and then destroyed. The walls were torn down, and the Temple, the palaces, and all other houses were burned to the ground. The fire may have raged for three days in the unhappy city—August 15–18, 586 B.C.—as the two dates of 2 Kings 25:82 and Jer. 52:12, 13, seem to indicate. Most of the Jews were carried as captives to Babylonia, but some of the poorest of the country were left behind. Nebuchadnezzar appointed over them as governor a Jew, Gedaliah, at Mizpah (2 Kings 25:22; 2 Chron. 36:20).

**Gedaliah as Governor (586 B.C.).**—Gedaliah seems to have served as governor for only a short time, although the lack of a year date in 2 Kings 25:25 leaves it uncertain how long after the fall of Jerusalem he was assassinated. Jeremiah, who had been a prisoner in Jerusalem at the fall of the city, was released by Nebuchadnezzar's army commander and joined Gedaliah at Mizpah. Also, several Jewish field commanders who had escaped from the debacle found their way to Mizpah. One of them, Ishmael, a relative of Zedekiah, a fanatical royalist, killed Gedaliah, his staff, and the Chaldean garrison of Mizpah, and tried to join the Ammonites, probably planning to continue the fight against Nebuchadnezzar with their help. This plan was thwarted by Johanan, another general of Zedekiah, who intercepted Ishmael and liberated his captives. Ishmael escaped with eight men to the Ammonites, but Johanan and the remnants of the army that were with him, fearing Nebuchadnezzar, went to Egypt and forced Jeremiah and Baruch to join them. Thus ends Judah's pre-exilic history.

### Bibliography

For brief suggestive bibliographies on works dealing with ancient history and archeology, see [Vol. I, pp. 131 and 148](#). The following additional books, though not necessarily agreeing with the views set forth in this commentary, are useful, at least in part, for reference on phases of the period discussed in this article. Babylonian Chronicle. See entry under Wiseman.

- BRIGHT, JOHN. *A History of Israel*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972. Written by a moderately conservative scholar; it varies on some points from the interpretation of history presented in this commentary, such as the Exodus date or the time sequence of Ezra's and Nehemiah's ministries. *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vols. I, II, 3d ed.; Vol. III, original ed. See entry on page 163.
- NOTH, MARTIN. *The History of Israel*. 2d ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1960. 479 pp. Written by a liberal scholar, it differs in many respects from Bright's views and from those presented in this commentary, but is today the most widely used work on the history of Israel.
- OLMSTEAD, A. T. *History of Assyria*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923. 695 pp. This history is badly out of date, since much newly found material has added much to our knowledge of Assyrian history and especially its chronology, but no more recent book has yet replaced it in the English language. *History of Palestine and Syria to the Macedonian Conquest*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931. 664 pp. Reprint: Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972. The book is of merit because its author describes the Hebrews as part of the ancient world and does not treat them as if they had lived in isolation. Yet, the author, a higher critic, has dealt very liberally with his Biblical source material.
- PARKER, RICHARD A., and DUBBERSTEIN, W. H. *Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*. Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1956. 47 pp. This book reconstructs from source material the Babylonian chronological system, which was adopted by the Persians and Seleucids. Calendrical tables at the end make it easy to convert any Babylonian date into its B.C. equivalent with fairly high accuracy.
- SMITH, SIDNEY. *Early History of Assyria to 1000 B.C.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1928. 418 pp. A good survey, though its chronology is out of date, since new discoveries have altered the placement of many earlier kings. For 1500 B.C. and after—the period chiefly discussed in this article—Smith's presentation is acceptable.

- THIELE, EDWIN R. *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Rev. ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965. 232 pp. This work by a Seventh-day Adventist scholar deals with Hebrew chronology for the period of the kings of Judah and Israel, from Solomon's death to the fall of Jerusalem. It is significant chiefly for the chronological aspects of the history of the period.
- WISEMAN, D. J., ed. *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum*. London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1961. 99 pp., 21 pl. Text and translation of cuneiform tablets (first printed in 1956) adding hitherto unknown parts of the series of annalistic records that are called the Babylonian Chronicle (see Additional Note below; also p. 163). These texts are of utmost importance for a period of Neo-Babylonian history for which little historical source material was hitherto available—the early and late years of Nabopolassar and the first eleven years of Nebuchadnezzar.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE

The new portions of the Babylonian Chronicle (see entry under Wiseman, above) throw additional light on an important period of Biblical history, in which there are many synchronism between Biblical and Babylonian events. This has required in the present work a one-year shift (see p. 94) in some events and regnal dates, especially for Judah and Egypt. Other dates have been confirmed. For example, the year given in this commentary for Jehoiachin's capture, 597 B.C., is confirmed by the new evidence (which establishes the date as Adar 2, approximately March 16, 597 B.C.), thus settling a scholarly argument as to whether it was 598 or 597 B.C. On the other hand, the first printing of this volume dated the battle of Carchemish in 604 B.C.; it is now known to have occurred in the spring or early summer of 605 B.C. Further, these new tablets, by mentioning an Egyptian campaign in 609 and none in 608, confirm the date of 609 for the battle of Megiddo, instead of 608 as formerly held. Because of this and other later findings a number of minor changes have been made, particularly in this article. Jehoiakim's death date and the dates of the last reigns of Judah remain the same.

## *The Hebrew Calendar in Old Testament Times*

### I. Origin of the Hebrew Calendar

THOSE who have Jewish neighbors know that they celebrate their New Year's Day, which they call Rosh Hashana, in the autumn. If we ask a rabbi the date of Rosh Hashana, he will explain that it is the first of the Jewish month Tishri, but that it falls on different dates in our September or October in successive years, since it comes approximately at the new moon. The reason for this is that the Jews have a lunar calendar, now modified in form but originally reckoned by the moon. In ancient times the appearance of the new crescent after sunset, following several moonless nights, marked the beginning of the first day of each new month. The rabbi may explain further that the New Year season lasts through Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), on the 10th of the month, the most solemn day of the whole year, when Jews attend special synagogue services.

If we consult the Bible on these points, we find that New Year's Day (called the Blowing of Trumpets) and the Day of Atonement are the 1st and 10th of the 7th month (Lev. 23:24–32), not of the 1st month; and that the Passover, which always comes in the spring, is in the 1st month (Lev. 23:5). We find the answer to this puzzling situation, and to other problems, by a study of the origin and nature of the Jewish calendar as set forth in the Bible and other ancient records.

The early Hebrew calendar as given in the Bible was admirably adapted to the needs of an ancient people who had no clocks, no printed calendars, and, as far as we know, no astronomy. It was based on simple principles—the day beginning with sunset, the week counted by sevens continuously, the month beginning with the crescent moon, the year regulated by the harvest season.

Of course such a calendar must be adjusted to keep the year in step with the seasons, but so also must our solar calendar, used in most of the world today. The difference is that our year is only about a fourth of a day less than the true year of the seasons,

determined by the sun, whereas the common lunar year of 12 “moon” months is 10 or 11 days shorter than the true solar year. We adjust our solar-calendar year by letting the error run for 4 years, until a whole day is accumulated, which we add as the 29th of February. In the lunar calendar the larger error of 10 or 11 days is allowed to run until a month is accumulated; by adding a 13th month every 2 or 3 years (7 times in 19 years) this difference is compensated for.

The Israelites did not possess the advanced astronomical knowledge required for the development of the modern solar calendar with its leap-year adjustments, but God instituted at the Exodus a simple yet efficient method of keeping the calendar year from moving permanently out of step with the seasons of the natural year.

The Hebrews inherited the elements of the calendar from their Semitic ancestors, who from time immemorial had reckoned their months by the moon. To Abram, presumably, as to his Mesopotamian neighbors in Ur, each new month, and consequently the first day of the month, began with the evening of the visible crescent moon, and his descendants would have no reason to change the practice. Even when they were in Egypt there was no need of their abandoning their evening-to-evening day and their lunar month for the 365-day Egyptian solar calendar, for these bearded Semitic shepherds, who were an abomination to the Egyptians, lived apart in Goshen and followed their own customs.

Though they largely disregarded the Sabbath (PP 258) they undoubtedly preserved the knowledge of this weekly holy day and of the lunar month—for even a slave brickmaker can count seven days and can keep track of the return of the crescent. But it is quite possible that they became confused as to which new moon was to mark the beginning of the calendar year. If they had retained the method of adding a month periodically, as was done in Mesopotamia by the Babylonians and Assyrians, we have no record of it. Indeed, there is no mention of the practice in the Bible, although it is evident that the Mosaic calendar implies it.

Either because they had lost track of the year, or because God wished to cut them off from the heathen worship associated with the Canaanite year that began in the autumn, God definitely pointed out the spring month from which they were to reckon the year. Shortly before the Exodus He instructed Moses that “this month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Ex. 12:2). There was no systematic code of calendar rules, but the civil and ceremonial laws given through Moses contain incidental references to the elements of the calendar.

## **II. The Elements of the Hebrew Calendar**

**The Day From Evening to Evening.**—The day began for the Hebrew in the evening, as we know from the rule that the 10th day of the 7th month was to begin on the evening of the 9th (Lev. 23:32), that is, when the sun set at the close of the 9th day. The fact that the day ended at sunset is shown in the directions for purification: One who was ceremonially unclean 7 days went through certain purifying ceremonies on the 7th and was clean again “at even” (Num. 19:16, 19); and one who was unclean until even was said to become clean “when the sun is down” (Lev. 22:6, 7). Obviously then, if the 7th day of a period ends at sunset, then all the days of the period must end at sunset.

**The Week Marked Off by the Sabbath.**—The week was divinely marked out, even before the giving of the law, by the double portion of manna on the 6th day and the withholding of it on the 7th (Ex. 16). It was the only element of the calendar enshrined in the Decalogue, for the Sabbath has a moral aspect that is not connected with mere dates

and calendars. It is a sign of allegiance to the Creator, and it was revealed to Israel as part of the moral law, and as a symbol of sanctification (Ex. 31:13), not only of God's power to create, but also of His power to re-create. Therefore the week is independent of all calendars. Its purpose is not to reckon dates. Indeed, it is incommensurate with any calendar month or year.

**The Month Regulated by the Moon.**—The two Hebrew words for “month” are (1) *yerach*, related to *yareach*, “moon,” and (2) *chodesh*, literally “new one,” referring to the “new moon,” the “day of the new moon,” and thus a lunar “month,” from the root *chadash*, “to renew.” *Yareach* is used infrequently, the common word being *chodesh*.

The month in which the Israelites left Egypt was set as the first of the year. This was called Abib, the “month of ears” of grain. It was the spring month of the opening Palestinian harvest, later called Nisan, as it is known to the present day (see Ex. 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1; Esther 3:7). This was evidently a lunar month to which the Hebrews were already accustomed, because nothing is said of instituting a new kind of month. If the change had been from a solar to a lunar type, some sort of instructions as to how to reckon the new month would have been necessary. The innovation was merely that “this month” was to be the first, as it had presumably not been before.

The first of the month was considered a special day, celebrated by the blowing of trumpets and by extra sacrifices (Num. 10:10; 28:11–14). New moons are frequently mentioned along with Sabbaths and festivals (2 Kings 4:23; Isa. 1:13, 14; 66:23, etc.).

That the month began with the new moon is shown by an incident in the time of David. After Saul had sought his life, David tested the king's attitude toward him by absenting himself from the royal table on a new moon feast. Saul said nothing on the new moon, but his wrath burst forth when David's place was empty again “on the morrow, which was the second day of the month” (1 Sam. 20:24–27). Obviously, then, the first day of the month, as would be expected in a lunar calendar, was the new moon (the visible crescent, not the astronomical new moon; the difference is explained on pp. 115, 116).

**Pre-Exilic Names of the Months.**—We have very little information about the Jewish months before the Babylonian Exile. There were 12 months (1 Kings 4:7), but we do not even know their names, except for the 1st month Abib (Ex. 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; Deut. 16:1), the 2d month Zif (1 Kings 6:1), the 7th month Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2), and the 8th month Bul (1 Kings 6:38). These were evidently Canaanite names; Phoenician inscriptions have been found that mention Ethanim and Bul. This is not surprising, since the Hebrew and Canaanite languages were closely related. More often the Bible refers to the months by number, previous to the Exile, rather than by name (Ex. 12:2; 16:1; 19:1; 1 Kings 12:32; Jer. 28:1; 39:2).

**Length of the Month.**—Nothing is said of the number of days in a month. In later times the lengths of the months and the intervals between the 13-month years were calculated by astronomical rules and fixed in a systematized calendar. But in the beginning the months must have been determined by the direct observation of the moon. Since the phases of the moon repeat themselves every 29 1/2 days, approximately, the crescent would reappear in the evening at the close of the 29th or 30th of the month. Ordinarily the months would alternate 30 and 29 days, but this was not always true. There are not only minor variations in the motion of the moon that affect the uniformity of the intervals, but also weather conditions that sometimes prevent the visibility of the

crescent. We are told in later Jewish writings that it was the custom to look for the moon at the close of the 29th. If it was visible in the evening sky after sunset, the day then beginning was reckoned as the first of the new month; if it was not yet visible, or was obscured by clouds, that day was the 30th. The day following the 30th always began the new month, even if the moon was still obscured by clouds. Thus there could be two or even three 30-day months in succession, although this was not usual.

The Moslems of the present day count their months by the observed moon (except that they use the Gregorian calendar also in their contacts with the Western world), and thus in isolated districts the lunar date may be one day behind or ahead of the date in a neighboring village. But the Jews, living in a relatively small area, seem to have had a centralized system controlled by the priests at Jerusalem. There are traditional accounts of witnesses reporting the appearance of the crescent, and of fire signals heralding the beginning of the new month from hilltop to hilltop throughout the land, so that all Israel could begin the month together.

In later times, certainly in the revised form of the calendar instituted some centuries after the time of Christ, the 6 months from Nisan through Elul ran 30 and 29 days alternately, and any adjustments required by the moon's variation were made in the other part of the year, so as to leave the intervals between the festivals always the same. Such adjustments would not have been made while the beginning of each month still depended on the observation of the crescent. David's remark that "to morrow is the new moon" (1 Sam. 20:5) does not necessarily indicate that the months were fixed in advance by calculation. David could have estimated it from the preceding month without being more than one day off, and he may have been speaking on the 30th, which would necessarily be the last day of the month. We have no way of knowing when any system of regular calculation came in, but it was probably a late development. The dates on clay-tablet documents from Babylonia, written many centuries after David, show no fixed sequence of 30-day and 29-day months, and Babylonian computations made in advance for a specific month often left a days uncertainty.

**Lunisolar Year.**—The number of months in a year was not specifically mentioned in the Law (for a later period, see 1 Kings 4:7), though that was probably taken for granted from the beginning, for both Egypt and Mesopotamia had 12 months. The 13th lunar month was always one of the 12 doubled. But 12 lunar months end approximately 11 days earlier than a complete solar year reckoned from the same starting point. Hence it would have become evident very early that in a series of uncorrected lunar years (such as the Moslems use to this day), the calendar would move gradually earlier in relation to the seasonal year, at the rate of about 11 days annually. Eventually it would make a complete circuit of the seasons and count an extra year in about 33 solar years, or about 3 years extra in a century. The effect on chronology is obvious. But no known Semitic calendar of ancient times was allowed to run uncorrected. The adjustment was made in Babylonia by the periodic intercalation, or insertion, of an intercalary month every few years—that is, by repeating either the 6th or the 12th month—at first in a rather irregular fashion, later in a 19-year cycle.

Such a lunar calendar, of 12 and 13 months, adjusted in this manner to the solar year, is sometimes called a lunisolar year. It varies within a month in relation to exact dates in the solar calendar. That is why Easter, dated originally from the Passover, and still calculated by a lunar-calendar system, wanders over different dates in our calendar,

within the range of about a month. Yet the lunisolar calendar, such as that of the Mesopotamians and the Jews, was nearer correct in a long series of years than the Egyptian solar calendar, which was reckoned as 365 days continuously without a leap year (see Vol. I, p. 176). It is true that a single Egyptian year of 365 days was nearer the true year than a Jewish or Babylonian year of 354 or perhaps 384 days, but the Egyptian calendar never corrected its smaller error, and therefore wandered off a day every 4 years, and accumulated this difference. On the other hand, the lunisolar calendar, with a larger variation each year, periodically corrected itself, so that a given number of Jewish years equaled the number of true solar years in the same period. There could never be an extra Hebrew year in 33 seasonal years, for every Jewish year had a Passover, held in connection with a harvest, and there can be only 33 harvest seasons in 33 years.

**The Year Regulated by the Festivals.**—The Hebrews needed no astronomical cycles to correct their calendar year so long as they kept the Passover as it was prescribed in the Law. Since God wished to give the Israelites a system of annual festivals to teach religious lessons in connection with seasonal events, He provided for a calendar system that would enable them to know in advance the regular times for these gatherings and to observe these feasts at the proper season. This lunar system, similar to that long used in Mesopotamia, was easy enough to follow by observing the moon. Even the needed periodical correction could be determined in a simple fashion. Upon leaving Egypt, the Israelites had not accumulated a body of astronomical knowledge on which to base a dating system, and God did not give Moses elaborate technical instructions for regulating the calendar. He indicated the “month of ears” as the first month (Abib, or Nisan), and from it the simple directions for the spring festivals provided a rule for an accurate calendar.

The clue to the correction of the lunar year to harmonize with the seasonal year was to be found in the rules that linked the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread with Abib, the “month of ears” (Deut. 16:1; Ex. 23:15; 34:18), and with the opening of the harvest. A sheaf of ripe grain was to be offered as first fruits during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:10–14), after which the new crop of barley could be eaten. Thus the middle of Abib must not be too early for the beginning of barley harvest, the earliest grain that ripened in Palestine. And further, it must not be too late for the Feast of Weeks to come during the wheat harvest, seven weeks later, for the latter feast was called “the firstfruits of wheat harvest” (Ex. 34:22; cf. Lev. 23:15–17; Deut. 16:9, 10). Less specific are the references to the time of the Feast of Ingathering (or Tabernacles), in the 7th month as coming at the end of the harvest after the vintage (see Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:34, 39). But the emphasis is unmistakably placed on the exact timing of the month of Abib in the spring, the month from which all the others are numbered.

**The Barley Harvest the Key.**—In order to keep Abib in alignment with the barley harvest, it was occasionally necessary to insert a 13th month, as often as the error had accumulated (during two or three years) sufficiently to move the 1st month too early for the grain to be ripe at the Passover season. A hypothetical example will illustrate this. The Israelites crossed the Jordan and observed their first Passover in Canaan in the time of harvest (Joshua 4:19; 5:10–12). The next year the feast would have shifted about 11 days earlier in relation to ripening time, and by the third year about 22 days earlier. By the third (certainly by the fourth) year Abib 16 would have moved out of range of the barley harvest, so that a sheaf of ripe grain could not be offered. Thus in that year the

month that would have begun the new year would be a 13th month instead, later called Veadar (Heb. *wa'adar*, literally, “and-Adar”), a second Adar; then the following new moon would begin Nisan late enough for ripe barley on the 16th. There is no proof of the use of the 13th month as early as Joshua’s day, but something like that must have happened if the Israelites followed the wave-sheaf rule literally.

Later Jewish tradition tells us that the priests responsible for the decision examined the crop in the 12th month, and that whenever it appeared that the barley would not be ripe by the 16th of the following month, they announced that the next month would be called Veadar, and that the month after this second Adar would be Nisan, the 1st month.

Many authorities hold that throughout the Biblical period the Jewish month was based on direct observation of the moon, and that the insertion of the second Adar was determined by the Judean barley harvest. Others find evidence in the postexilic period for the method of arbitrary calculation, such as a regular scheme of 30-day and 29-day months, and the 19-year cycle. Whenever computation was introduced it was probably checked and regulated by observation for a long time afterward.

Thus the years instituted at the Exodus began with Abib, or Nisan, which was evidently to be kept in step with the barley harvest by the insertion of a 13th month every two or three years (see table, p. 108).

### III. The Religious Festivals

**Passover.**—The series of religious festivals (see on Lev. 23) at the basis of the Jewish calendar began in the first month with the Passover (see on Ex. 12:1–11; Lev. 23:5; Deut. 16:1–7). On the 10th of the month a lamb was selected for each family or group, and penned up until its slaughter on the 14th. Preceding the 14th all traces of leaven were removed from the houses, preparatory to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then on the afternoon of the 14th, literally, “between the two evenings” (Deut. 16:6), the Passover lambs were slain. With the establishment of the Temple all sacrifices, including the Passover lamb, were required to be offered there (Deut. 16:5, 6). Every male Jew over 12 years of age was required to attend, and many women and children came voluntarily. Thousands of pilgrims gathered at Jerusalem annually for the Passover and the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed. (The term “Passover” was often used of the whole period.) See also Vol. I, pp. 705, 709.

**Feast of Unleavened Bread.**—The 15th of the 1st month was the first of the 7 days of unleavened bread (Ex. 23:15; 34:18; Lev. 23:6–14; Deut. 16:3–8), sometimes called the first day of the Passover (Eze. 45:21). It was a festival sabbath, on which no work was to be done (Lev. 23:6, 7; for the term “sabbath,” cf. vs. 24, 32). This was not a weekly Sabbath, falling on the 7th day of the week; rather, it fell on a fixed day of the month, the 15th of Nisan, and consequently on a different day of the week each year. It was the first of seven ceremonial sabbaths connected with the annual round of festivals (see italic dates in the table on p. 108), which were distinctly specified to be “beside the sabbaths of the Lord” (Lev. 23:38). These rest days were part of the ceremonial law; hence, unlike the 7th-day memorial of creation, were “a shadow of things to come” (Col. 2:17), types to be fulfilled in Christ.

On “the morrow after the sabbath”—the festival sabbath after the Passover—that is, the 16th of Nisan, came the ceremony of the wave sheaf, the first fruits of the barley crop. Until this ceremony was performed it was unlawful to eat of the new grain. The Feast of

Unleavened Bread ended on the 21st with another festival sabbath (Lev. 23:8; see also Vol. I, p. 709).

**Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks.**—Seven weeks from the day of the wave sheaf, early in the 3d month (later called Sivan), came the Feast of Weeks, celebrating the wheat harvest by the presentation of loaves in the Temple (see Lev. 23:15–21; Deut. 16:9–12). This was later called Pentecost, because it came 50 days (inclusive) after the offering of the wave sheaf (Lev. 23:16). This was another ceremonial sabbath, and a feast that required the attendance of every male Hebrew (Deut. 16:16). It is generally reckoned as occurring on the 6th day of the 3d month (Sivan), for that was the 50th day (inclusive) from Nisan 16 whenever the first 2 months had 30 and 29 days respectively, as was probably most often the case, and always the case after the number of days in each month became fixed. See also Vol. I, p. 709, and on Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:16.

**Blowing of Trumpets: the New Year (Modern Rosh Hashana).**—Six months after the Passover the series of autumn festivals began with the Blowing of Trumpets on the 1st of the 7th month (Tishri). The day, later called Rosh Hashana, the “beginning of the year,” was a festival sabbath (Lev. 23:24, 25; Num. 29:1). It celebrated the beginning of the civil year. This New Year’s Day was marked not only by the blowing of the trumpets but also by special sacrifices, almost double in number compared with the regular new-moon sacrifices (Num. 29:1–6; cf. ch. 28:11–15; see also on Ex. 23:16; Num. 29:1).

Yet the months always continued to be numbered from Nisan, in accordance with the command of God at the Exodus, for the alignment of the year with the seasons depended on the Nisan new moon as located in relation to the barley harvest. But the civil and agricultural year, and the sabbatical and jubilee years as well (see p. 111), began by the older reckoning, with Tishri, the 7th month.

If it seems strange that the year should be in any way considered as beginning with the 7th month, it should be remembered that in modern times we have the custom of beginning a fiscal year in some other month than January—often with July, our 7th month, and we date such a year as opening, for example, on “7/1/1954.” So the Jews to this day celebrate their New Year’s Day on Tishri 1, at the beginning of the 7th month. See also Vol. I, p. 709.

**Day of Atonement.**—The 10th day of the 7th month, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), was and still is the most solemn day of the year. It was not only a ceremonial sabbath but also a strict fast day (Lev. 23:27–32). According to the Babylonian Talmud, Tishri 1 (New Year’s Day) symbolizes the judgment:

“**Mishnah.** At four seasons [Divine] judgment is passed on the world: at Passover in respect of produce; at Pentecost in respect of fruit; at New Year all creatures pass before him [God] like children of Maron. ...

“Gemara. ... It has been taught: ‘All are judged on New Year and their doom is sealed on the Day of Atonement. ...’

“R. Kruspedai said in the name of R. Johanan: Three books are opened [in heaven] on New Year, one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitively in the book of death; the doom of the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonement; if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of death” (*The Babylonian Talmud*, Soncion English translation, tractate Rosh Hashanah, 16a, pp. 57, 58; brackets in the original.)

The Jews still regard the first ten days of the year, ending with the Day of Atonement, as somewhat a continuation of the New Year observance, an extra period of grace in



which the sins of the preceding year can still be forgiven, a sort of extension of the deadline for closing one's account with heaven. Even in our time the Day of Atonement is considered the day of judgment, since it offers the final opportunity for repentance. In the ancient ceremony of the 10th day, the sanctuary was cleansed of all the sins of the preceding year, which were thus symbolically removed forever from the congregation (Lev. 16), and on this days the last opportunity was given for repentance. Anyone who was not right with God on that day was cut off forever (see also Vol. I, pp. 705, 710, and on Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16; 23:27, 29).

On the Day of Atonement the trumpets blew to usher in the 50th year, or the jubilee (Lev. 25:9, 10), and presumably the sabbatical years also (see p. 111).

**Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles.**—Then came the joyous Feast of Ingathering, or Tabernacles, celebrating the completion of the agricultural cycle with the vintage and olive harvest. During this festival the people lived in “tabernacles,” or booths, of green branches in commemoration if their earlier wanderings as nomadic tent dwellers (Lev. 23:34–43, Deut. 16:13–15). This feast began with a ceremonial sabbath on the 15th of Tishri, and lasted 7 days; it was followed by another such sabbath, a “holy convocation,” on the 22d (it might be called the octave of Tabernacles). The Feast of Ingathering was the third of the annual feasts at which all the males of Israel were required to gather at Jerusalem (see Ex. 23:16, 17; Ex. 34:22, 23).

The tabulation on the next page gives for each month the time of its beginning, the dates of the feasts, and the principal seasonal events. For example, the first month, Abib (postexilic Nisan), begins at the new moon of March or April; on the 1st, 10th, 14th, etc., of that lunar month, respectively, occur the new moon, the selection of the lamb, the Passover, etc. and that month marks, approximately, the season of the latter rains, the barley harvest, etc.

### HEBREW MONTHS, FESTIVALS, AND SEASONS

| LUNAR<br>MONTHS                        | BEGIN<br>AT<br>NEW<br>MOON<br>OF | DAYS OF<br>LUNAR<br>MONTHS | FESTIVALS                                                                                      | APPROXIMATE<br>AGRICULTURAL<br>SEASONS |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Abib (Nisan)*<br>Ex. 23:15<br>Neh. 2:1 | March<br>or<br>April             | 1                          | ew Moon                                                                                        | atter rains<br>(Joel 2:23)             |
|                                        |                                  | 10                         | assover lamb<br>selected. Ex. 12:3                                                             |                                        |
|                                        |                                  | 14                         | ASSOVER killed “in<br>the evening”;<br>eaten “that<br>night,” beginning of<br>15th. Ex. 12:6-8 |                                        |
|                                        |                                  | 15†                        | NLEAVENED<br>BREAD begins.<br>Lev. 23:6, 7                                                     |                                        |
|                                        |                                  | 16                         | /ave sheaf offered.<br>Lev. 23:10-14                                                           | arley harvest;<br>new crop may         |

|                                       |                     |       |                                                                                                         |                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                       |                     | 21    | last day of<br>Unleavened Bread.<br>Lev. 23:8                                                           | be eaten<br>ry seasons be-<br>gins                                    |
| Zif [Iyyar]<br>1 Kings<br>6:1         | April<br>or<br>May  | 1     | ew Mooon                                                                                                |                                                                       |
|                                       |                     | 14    | assover for those<br>unclean in 1st<br>month. Num.<br>9:10, 11                                          | /heat ripe in<br>lowlands                                             |
| Sivan)<br>(Esther<br>8:9)             | May<br>or<br>June   | 1     | ew Moon                                                                                                 | arly figs                                                             |
|                                       |                     | 6     | ENTECOST, or<br>Feast of Weeks.<br>Waves loaves<br>offered, 50th day<br>from Nisan 16.<br>Lev. 23:15-21 | ot weather<br><br>/heat harvest,<br>general                           |
| Tammuz]                               | June<br>or July     | 1     | ew Moon                                                                                                 | /heat harvest<br>in mountains<br><br>irst grapes<br>lives in lowlands |
| Ab]                                   | July<br>or<br>Aug.  | 1     | ew Moon                                                                                                 |                                                                       |
| Elul)<br>(Neh.<br>6:15)               | Aug.<br>or<br>Sept. | 1     | ew Moon                                                                                                 | ates, figs                                                            |
| Ethanim<br>[Tishri]<br>1 Kings<br>8:2 | Sept.<br>or Oct.    | 1     | LOWING OF<br>TRUMPETS, Rosh<br>Hashana, or New<br>Year. Lev. 23:24,<br>25                               | intage                                                                |
|                                       |                     | 10    | AY OF<br>ATONEMENT, or<br>Yom<br>Kippur. Lev.<br>23:27-32; Lev. 16                                      |                                                                       |
|                                       |                     | 15-21 | EAST OF<br>INGATHERING or<br>Tabernacles.<br>Lev. 23:34-43                                              | nd of harvest                                                         |
|                                       |                     | 22    | oly convocation.                                                                                        | ormer or early                                                        |

|                                                    |                     |         |                                  |                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|                                                    |                     |         | Lev. 23:36, 39<br>Num. 29:12, 35 | rains                                    |
|                                                    |                     |         |                                  | lowing begins<br>arley and<br>wheat sown |
| 3ul [Marhesh-<br>van or<br>Hesvan]<br>1 Kings 6:38 | Oct.<br>or<br>Nov.  | 1       | ew Moon                          |                                          |
| Chisleu or<br>Kislev)<br>(Neh.<br>1:1)             | Nov.<br>or<br>Dec.  | 1       | ew Moon                          | inter rains                              |
| (Tebeth)<br>(Esther<br>2:16)                       | Dec.<br>or Jan.     | 1       | ew Moon                          | owlands green                            |
| (Shebat)<br>(Zech.<br>1:7)                         | Jan.<br>or Feb.     | 1       | ew Moon                          |                                          |
| (Adar)<br>(Esther<br>3:7)                          | Feb.<br>or<br>March | 1       | ew Moon                          | range ripe in<br>lowlands                |
|                                                    |                     | (14, 15 | urim.) Esther 9:21-28            | arley ripe at<br>Jericho                 |
| Second Adar<br>7 times in<br>19 years.]            | March               | [14, 15 | urim in 7 out of 19<br>years.]   |                                          |

#### IV. Year Reckonings

**Spring and Autumn Beginnings of the Year.**—The Canaanite calendar begin in the autumn, as did the Jewish civil year; therefore we may assume either that the patriarchs used it while in Canaan, before Jacob and his family went to Egypt, or that the Israelites adopted it from their neighbors after the Exodus. The first alternative seems more likely, since Moses himself refers to an autumn reckoning in the book of Exodus, as will be seen. The Hebrews combined the numbering of the months from the spring, as instituted at the Exodus, with the year beginning in the fall, and thus had a double reckoning, the “sacred” year beginning with the first month and the civil year beginning with the 7th month.

Josephus says that the ancient reckoning was from the fall, but “Moses, however, appointed Nisan, that is to say Xanthicus [the corresponding Macedonian month name], as the first month for the festivals, because it was in this month that he brought the Hebrews out of Egypt; he also reckoned this month as the selling and buying and other ordinary affairs he preserved the ancient order” (*Antiquities* i 3. 3. Loeb ed.).

**“The End of the Year” in the Autumn.**—Even in the book of Exodus, which designates the spring month of Abib as the first month of the (“sacred”) year, there are evidences for the beginning of the older and more familiar year in the autumn. These are references to its “end” in that season. The difference, however, is not great, since any year begins at the same point at which the preceding one ends. The Feast of Ingathering,

or Tabernacles, in the 7th month (Tishri) is said to come “at the year’s end” (Ex. 34:22). Again it is referred to as “the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field” (Ex. 23:16). Since it celebrated the bounties of the agricultural year that had just closed, it was identified as coming near the end of the year, although it actually began 15 days after the end, in the early days of the civil year that began on Tishri 1.

**Agricultural Year.**—In Palestine and neighboring lands the agricultural year has always begun in the autumn. After the spring grass has been parched and the soil baked by the long, rainless summer, the autumn rains moisten the soil for planting. This is the early rain, beginning perhaps in October and increasing in November. The wet season lasts through the winter ending with the “latter rain” of spring, which matures the grain (see Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24; Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23). The barley harvest in Palestine begins in the middle or end of April, and that of wheat comes in the next month, followed by summer fruits, then grapes and olives in the late summer and fall. Note that from April/May to October there is dry weather for the successive harvests, as is shown by the following tabulation from Ellsworth Huntington, *Palestine and its Transformation* (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1911), page 34.

The minute fractions of an inch listed between May and October show that the scant showers thus represented by these averages come so infrequently that these months may be considered actually dry.

**Average Rainfall at Jerusalem, in Inches**

|          |      |        |       |           |      |
|----------|------|--------|-------|-----------|------|
| January  | 6.41 | May    | 0.25  | September | 0.03 |
| February | 5.05 | June   | 0.008 | October   | 0.37 |
| March    | 4.18 | July   | 0.00  | November  | 2.38 |
| April    | 1.60 | August | 0.004 | December  | 5.53 |
|          |      | Annual | 25.8  |           |      |
|          |      | total, |       |           |      |

The only actual calendar document that comes from the pre-exilic period of Israel is a stone plaque from the century in which Solomon lived. It was found in Gezer, a city that the king of Egypt took from the Canaanites and presented to his daughter, Solomon’s wife. Written on this bit of limestone is a summary of an agricultural calendar, beginning in the fall. This “Gezer calendar” does not give month names, but lists the main activities of the farmer’s year month by month.

**Civil Year Reckoned From Tishri.**—Since the whole seasonal cycle of nature was regarded as beginning anew in the autumn with the return of the life giving rains, the basic idea of the new year seems to have centered in the fall. This made it inevitable that the civil year was thought of as beginning with Tishri, even though the months were always numbered from Nisan. The significance of Nisan stems from the fact that the whole alignment of the calendar year with the seasons was determined by the placing of the first month at the time of the barley harvest. It was logical to number as first, the month that followed the inserted 13th month, for in that way the sequence of numbers would never be interrupted. But the emphasis given the 1st of Tishri as the principal beginning of the year is evidenced by the blowing of trumpets, by the special sacrifices, surpassing those of Nisan 1, and by the connection of that day with the day of judgment.

**Regnal Years of Kings Reckoned From the Fall.**—In the time of the Hebrew kings the customary method of designating the years for dating purposes was to number them

in series through each king's reign. The formula for a date line was: "on the — of the — month of the — year of King —." There is evidence that these regnal years were reckoned from the autumn, presumably Tishri 1, in the united Hebrew kingdom (in the reign of Solomon), and afterward in the southern kingdom of Judah, in the time of Josiah; on the other hand, the spring year appears to have been employed in the northern kingdom of Israel (see pp. 134, 146). The usage of Israel is not indicated directly in the Bible narrative, but it seems to be a reasonable deduction from the synchronism between the successive reigns of the two kingdoms as recorded in the books of Kings.

Immediately after the captivity, there is rather inconclusive evidence for a spring reckoning of regnal years after the Babylonian fashion, but in the time of the re-establishment of the Jewish commonwealth and the revival of a national spirit under Ezra and Nehemiah, we find direct evidence of the autumn beginning of the regnal year (see article on chronology in Vol. III). The regnal years used in dating were reckoned as they had been under the kingdom of Judah, but in the name of the Persian kings, whose subjects the Jews now were. For an explanation of the differing methods of numbering calendar years by the reigns of kings, see pp. 138, 139.

**Sabbatical and Jubilee Years.**—One of the distinctive features of the Hebrew laws was the provision for letting the land rest, that is, lie fallow, every 7th year. Just as the 7th day was the weekly Sabbath for man, the 7th year, at the end of a "week" of years, was a sabbath of rest to the land, when there was to be no sowing or reaping (Lev. 25:2–7, 20–22). The 7th year was also the "year of release," for the remission of debts (Deut. 15:1–15). Then, after 7 "weeks" of years, the 50th year was the jubilee, when not only were all Israelite slaves to be released, but all lands sold during the period (with certain exceptions) were to revert to the original owners of their heirs (Lev. 25:8–17, 23–34, 47–55). The purpose of this was to keep the family inheritances intact, so that the rich could never buy up the land and leave a landless class. Authorities differ as to whether the 50th year was added to the and leave a landless class. Authorities differ as to whether the 50th year was added to the 50th year was added to the 49, or whether it was, by inclusive count, also the 1st year of the next cycle.

The 50th year was specifically mentioned as beginning in the autumn. The 7th year, though not so specified, was obviously similar, not only because it was in the same series as the 50th, but because a year in which there was no sowing or reaping must necessarily coincide with the agricultural year. The trumpets were blown to announce the jubilee on the Day of Atonement, the 10th of the 7th month (Lev. 25:9). Since there is no logical connection between the jubilee year and the Day of Atonement ritual, it is probable that the later rabbis were right in saying that these years coincided with the civil calendar year, beginning on the 1st of Tishri. The provisions of the jubilee, involving the restoration of property and slaves, went into operation at the end of the 10th of Tishri instead of the 1st, because the first 10 days of the year were given over to New Year observances. That is, the jubilee began when the regular business of the civil year opened, on the day that began with the evening at the close of the Day of Atonement, the 10th of Tishri.

**Varying Lengths of the Lunar Years.**—It is to be noted that in all these various methods of reckoning years the basic unit of measure was evidently the lunar-calendar year of 12 months, corrected periodically to the solar or seasonal year by the 13th month. The common year of 12 months consisted of 354 days, but the adjustment to the moon

sometimes required a 355-day year; and the periodic correction to the solar year required the addition of another month, and the lengthening of certain years to 383 or 384 days. This correction, if consistently applied as indicated by the barley harvest, never allowed the year to shift more than a month from its seasonal alignment. For this reason the number of Jewish calendar years over a long period, as has been pointed out (p. 104) always equaled the number of seasonal or solar years.

**The 360-Day Year Not Literal but Symbolic.**—It should be explained, for it is subject to misunderstanding, that the Bible gives no evidence whatever that the 360-day *prophetic* year of twelve 30-day months has anything to do with the Hebrew *calendar* year. There are a few ancient traditions that the year earlier contained 360 days. It is not clear whether these are a mere reflection of the Egyptian solar year, disregarding the 5 extra days at the end, or whether they refer to a genuine 360-day year, which would have remained perennially out of step with both the moon and the seasons. But there are no solid facts on which to base such a method of reckoning, and certainly nothing to connect it with the Hebrews, who began the month with the crescent moon (see p. 102).

The mention of a 150—day period during the Flood, which seems to be equated with 5 months, does not necessarily mean that the antediluvian calendar known to Noah had uniform months of 30 days each. The period has been interpreted also as indicating an unusual lunar year or a 365-day solar year (see Vol. I, p. 183). Whatever it was, it has no bearing on the lunar calendar used long afterward by the Hebrews. It is impossible to harmonize a 360-day year of 30-day months with months measured by the moon. In the very nature of the case a prophetic month or year, where the year-day principle is involved, must contain a fixed number of symbolic days if the length of the period is to be certainly known. Such a prophetic period cannot be based on a lunar calendar, whose months and years are variable. A reckoning by theoretical months of 30 days each would be understandable, and quite logical, for the idea that a month ought to have 30 days was implied in the later Jewish expressions used of the two types of months; a 30-day month was a “full” month, and a 29-day month was “hollow,” or deficient. It is possible, though there is no evidence, that the Hebrews used a theoretical 30-day month for business purposes, as did the Babylonians. Even today we compute interest by a month of 30 days, although everyone knows that the months are not uniformly 30 days in length.

The lengths of the prophetic month and year are not directly given in the Bible, but can be derived from several prophetic periods that are obviously equivalent. Since in these prophecies  $3\frac{1}{2}$  “times” are 1260 days (Rev. 12:6, 14), and 42 months are 1260 days (Rev. 11:2, 3), they must be equal. Since 42 months are  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, then  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times must be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years. Further, since  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years and 42 months are each equivalent to 1260 days, one year of this type is obviously 360 days, and one month 30 days (for the prophetic interpretation of the 360-day year, see on Dan. 7:25). A century and a half ago many writers on the prophecies thought that the 360-day prophetic year was the Jewish calendar year, but they did not understand the nature of the lunar calendar used by the Hebrews. Such outmoded authorities should not be quoted; the prophetic month and year can be based on the Bible itself.

## V. New Calendar Problems After the Exile.

**The Jews and the Babylonian Calendar.**—When the Jews returned to Palestine after the Babylonian exile, they brought with them the Babylonian month names in modified form. For example, Abib became Nisan, from *Nisanu*, the first month of the Babylonian year. Some authorities think that until after the Exile the Hebrews did not insert a second Adar—a 13th month—to correct the calendar. But the Passover had to be synchronized with the barley harvest; therefore the Jews, from earliest times, must have had a 13th month or its equivalent. It is clear that the Israelites were not faithful in observing the Levitical law, but there is no reason to suppose that they never observed the Passover throughout the centuries.

Some think that the returning Hebrew exiles adopted the Babylonian calendar outright, including their 19-year cycle, and their exact system of inserting extra months. There is documentary evidence that the Jews after the captivity used the equivalent of the 19-year cycle, that is, the insertion of 7 extra months in 19 years, but there is no proof that they adopted the Babylonian custom of inserting a second Elul (the 6th month) at times instead of a second Adar. Jewish authorities have always held that only the second Adar was used, and other authorities agree that in this they differed from the Babylonians. The reason for this was probably the fact that doubling the 6th month, Elul, instead of the 12th, Adar, would introduce an irregular interval between the spring and fall festivals, and thus cause confusion in attending the autumn feasts.

The Bible gives no direct evidence on the question, but the command to keep the Passover in the 1st month, the “month of ears,” and to observe three feasts in the 7th month, strongly implies that the autumn feasts were intended to come 6 months after the month of ears, and therefore that there was no irregularity in the interval from Nisan through Tishri.

In fact, a second Elul would have no significance in the Hebrew calendar, for the necessity for inserting the 13th month arose only from the requirement of keeping Nisan in line with the barley harvest. This could best be accomplished by adding a second Adar, just preceding Nisan. Placing the extra month 6 months earlier—if indeed the need for it could be predicted that far ahead—would have been of no advantage, and would have involved the disadvantage of interrupting the normal sequence of the festival months.

**The Nineteen-Year Cycle.**—The adoption of a 19-year cycle would have been very helpful in fixing in advance the time of the Passover. As long as the insertion of the 13th month could not be announced until the barley crop was examined in Adar, the month of the Passover could not always be known far enough ahead to avoid inconvenience to those who had to make their plans to attend. But a 19-year cycle would have enabled them to space 7 extra months in every 19 years in a regular sequence of 2-year and 3-year intervals, and to keep the Passover date within the known season of ripening barley. The calendar would be regulated systematically and the 13-month years, recurring at predetermined intervals in each cycle, would always be known in advance.

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<sup>3</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jos 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

This 19-year cycle can be explained as an expression of the relationship between solar and lunar years; namely, that 235 lunar months almost exactly (within an hour or two) equal 19 solar years. But 19 lunar years of 12 months each would total not 235 but 228 months; therefore if an extra lunar month is inserted 7 times in every 19 years, the 19th lunar and solar years will end together. If, for example, the spring equinox fell on Nisan 1 in any given year, it would come on Nisan 1 again 19 years later.

The Babylonians developed such a cycle experimentally. By the early 4th century B.C. they inserted the extra month always in the same years of each 19-year cycle: a second *Addaru* (Adar) in what we call the 3d, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, and 19th years, and a second *Ululu* (Elul) in the 17th. (It is known which years had 13 months but not which years the Babylonians called the “year 1” of each cycle; hence these numerals are arbitrary.) The Jews, however, seem never to have employed a second Elul, but only the second Adar. The question of when the Jews adopted the 19-year cycle is not settled. Since that cycle was known in Babylonia long before the Christian Era, and many Jews lived there from the 6th century B.C., it would seem hardly probable that the Jewish rabbis who were in charge of the calendar would remain ignorant of the principles of calendrical calculation until the fixed calendar was introduced, long after Christ’s day. It is probable that such principles were known long before the traditional methods were abandoned. Up to the time of the destruction of the Temple, the barley harvest was the major factor, but after that, and especially after the Jews were driven away from Jerusalem, it was less relevant to the problem that the convenience of uniform calculation in widely scattered areas.

Although the Bible nowhere hints of any 19-year cycle, the barley harvest rule would automatically result in an average of 7 extra months in every 19 years. Thus the laws of the festivals, without specifying any calendrical rules as such, served to regulate the Palestinian calendar naturally and simply.

**Calculation of the Months Versus Observation.**—The question of the 13th month arose only once in two or three years, but the question of the beginning of the month was ever present. Especially after the captivity, when the majority of Jews remained in Babylonia, it was a very real problem to keep all the faithful observing the new moons and festivals together. The mere difference in the dating of documents was a minor matter, but the prospect of some Jews profaning sacred days while others were observing them was abhorrent to the pious.

The sanctity of the Temple and the prestige of the priesthood kept the Babylonian Jews looking toward Palestine for authority in this matter. Thus the postexilic calendar, even as followed by those Jews who remained for centuries in Babylonia, was regulated in Jerusalem. The first day of the month—at least after each 29-day month—was announced by fire signals repeated from mountaintop to mountaintop to the outlying districts of Palestine, and even on to Babylonia. Eventually, however, false beacons, lighted a day early by the Samaritans, misled the distant Jews into beginning a new month after 29 days when the outgoing month should have had 30 days. Consequently the fire signals were replaced by messages sent by runners.

In Egypt, where fire signals could not be used, and afterward in all countries outside Palestine, the Jews came to observe new moons and festivals on two successive days, in order to be sure of having the right day. Even a month that followed a 29-day month could not be assumed to have 30 days; this doubt as to the first of the new month led to



the observance of both the 30th and the day following. This custom was well known in Rome. Horace referred in his *Satires* (i. 9. 67–70) to the Jewish “*tricesima sabbata*,” or “30th-day sabbath”:

“HORACE: ‘Certainly I do not know why you wish to speak secretly with me, you were saying.’

“FUSCUS: ‘I remember well, but in a better time let me speak: today is *tricesima sabbata*: do you wish to offend the circumcised Jews?’”

After the lengths of the months became a matter of calculation, they could be known in advance without depending on direct observation. Unfortunately we do not know when the change was made from observation to a regular sequence of 30-day and 29-day months. We have considerable direct evidence of postexilic calendar practice from dated Jewish documents found in Egypt, but the evidence from these sources has given rise to differences of opinion on the question of calculation versus observation.

It is likely that the calendar officials employed methods of calculation while still retaining the practice of summoning witnesses to report the appearance of the crescent every month, or at least for the month of Nisan. Such traditional procedures would naturally be retained long after they had become unnecessary.

During the period when the month depended on the observation of the crescent, or on confirmation by witnesses, there was uncertainty in distant places as to the correct day of the month, for, on account of certain variable factors, the actual appearance of the crescent could not be predicted. The failure to see a crescent on the evening after the 29th of the month might mean that the month should have 30 days, but it might also mean that atmospheric conditions unfavorable to visibility might delay its being seen in some places later than in Jerusalem. And the difference in longitude between Palestine and Babylonia could sometimes mean that the crescent became visible in Jerusalem after it had already set for Babylonia (see next section). These elements of uncertainty operated even after the astronomical new moon, called “the moon in conjunction,” could be computed.

**The Moon and the Observed Lunar Month.**—The interval between the astronomical new moon and the visible new moon (or crescent), with which the ancient Semites began each month of their *observed* lunar calendar, is variable. As the earth moves in one year round the sun, the moon circles the earth 12 times and a fraction. During each revolution of the moon (which marks a lunar month), that body passes between the earth and the sun, and also passes the point on the opposite side of the earth from the sun. When we see it opposite the sun, with its face completely illuminated by sunlight, we say that the moon is “full.” When it passes between us and the sun, we do not see it at all because the side toward us is unlighted. When it emerges from between the earth and the sun and becomes visible to us in crescent form—that is, we see the edge of its lighted portion—we say that it is “new.”

In order to understand this better, let us visualize an imaginary line connecting the center of the earth and the center of the sun. As the moon circles our globe its path lies in a variable plane tilted at an angle in relation to that of the earth; therefore it is sometimes above and sometimes below the plane of the earth’s orbit as each month it passes between us and the sun and crosses the earth-sun line. If, as happens occasionally, the moon intersects this line, so that its shadow falls directly on our globe, observers within that shadow see its black disk darkening part or all of the sun in a solar eclipse. Most of the time, when it crosses above or below the imaginary line, it does not obscure the sun,

but remains invisible, and therefore the exact time of the crossing (which astronomers call conjunction) cannot be observed. The time of conjunction (the astronomical new moon) is given in almanacs and on some calendars, where it is symbolized by a solid black disk.

But it is not often that the crescent becomes visible in the evening sky on the day marked “New Moon” in the almanac. When the moon passes conjunction during the day, it is too nearly in line with the sun to be seen that evening after sunset. Only after an interval—averaging about a day and a half—does it move far enough past the sun to bring its lighted side toward the earth sufficiently to appear as a crescent. When the crescent becomes visible, it may be seen on one part of the earth just after sunset, but observers on other parts of the globe farther east, for whom the moon will have already set, cannot see the crescent until the next evening. That is why the lunar month, starting with the observation of the crescent, could sometimes begin a day earlier in Egypt or Jerusalem, for example, than it would in Babylon.

The interval between conjunction and the visible crescent varies not only with the hour of conjunction and the locality, but also with the speed and angle of the moon’s course, which are variable. When it is slower, the moon takes longer—perhaps two or three days—to move far enough from the sun to be seen. Further, atmospheric conditions affect visibility, and in certain seasons the crescent may be entirely obscured by clouds on the first evening, and so a 29-day lunar month might be given 30 days and the new month delayed one day.

**The Postexilic Month Names.**—After the return from Exile, the Babylonian month names were adopted, in slightly changed spelling, as has been mentioned. As for the beginning of the year, both fall and spring reckoning seem to be used in the postexilic books of the Bible. It is to be kept in mind that regardless of whether the year is reckoned from the autumn or from the spring, Nisan is always numbered as the 1st month, Tishri the 7th, and Adar the 12th. Thus the civil year begins with the 7th month and ends with the 6th. This alignment of the months, and the approximate equivalents in our calendar, is made clear by the following tabulation:

## THE JEWISH CALENDAR

4

(With postexilic month names derived from Babylonia)

| Religious Year (Spring to Spring) | Beginning of Jewish months (varying with moon, within range of one month) | Civil Year (Fall to Fall) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Order of the months               |                                                                           | Order of the months       |
| 1. Nisan                          | March/April                                                               |                           |
| 2. Iyyar*                         | April/May                                                                 |                           |
| 3. Sivan                          | May/June                                                                  |                           |

<sup>4</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jos 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

|                     |             |                     |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 4. Tammuz*          | June/July   |                     |
| 5. Ab*              | July/Aug.   |                     |
| 6. Elul             | Aug./Sept.  |                     |
| 7. Tishri*          | Sept./Oct.  | 7. Tishri*          |
| 8. Marheshvan*      | Oct./Nov.   | 8. Marheshvan*      |
| 9. Kislev (Chisleu) | Nov./Dec.   | 9. Kislev (Chisleu) |
| 10. Tebeth          | Dec./Jan.   | 10. Tebeth          |
| 11. Shebat          | Jan./Feb.   | 11. Shebat          |
| 12. Adar†           | Feb./March  | 12. Adar†           |
|                     | March/April | 1. Nisan            |
|                     | April/May   | 2. Iyyar*           |
|                     | May/June    | 3. Sivan            |
|                     | June/July   | 4. Tammuz*          |
|                     | July/Aug.   | 5. Ab*              |
|                     | Aug./Sept.  | 6. Elul             |

**The Postexilic Year in the Bible.**—Ezekiel does not make it clear whether the years of his era, beginning with the exile of Jehoiachin, were reckoned from Nisan or from Tishri, or were counted by anniversaries from the date of the king's captivity. But if Ezekiel, as is generally held, reckoned the year from the spring, he may have done so because he lived in Babylonia and used the official Babylonian calendar, which began the year with *Nisanu* (Nisan). Thus his usage would have no bearing on Jewish calendar practice. Haggai, and presumably his contemporary and colleague, Zechariah (although the latter is inconclusive), are generally believed to have used the spring year, for if the events of Haggai 1:1 and 2:1, 10 are related in chronological order, the 7th and 9th months followed the 6th month in the 2d year of Darius, as could not have occurred if the 7th month had begun a new year. The book of Esther, which identifies Nisan as the 1st month, Sivan as the 3d, and Adar as the 12th, sheds no light on how the Jews reckoned the beginning of the year, since the dates in this book are given in connection with official acts of leaders in the Persian government. These events would presumably be dated in the Babylonian calendar, which the Persian rulers adopted from the time that Cyrus conquered Babylonia.

In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra-Nehemiah was originally one book), there is proof that the returned Jews counted the years of the king from the fall, presumably by the civil year beginning with Tishri (see article on chronology in Vol. III). Nehemiah mentions Chisleu (Kislev, the 9th month) as preceding Nisan (the 1st month) in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 1:1; 2:1). Evidently he was thinking in terms of the old regnal year of Judah and reckoning from the 7th month, Tishri, rather than the Persian new year in Nisan. Although the events mentioned in these two months occurred in the Persian king's palace, the book was not written until after Nehemiah had gone to Jerusalem and engaged in the rebuilding of the Jewish community there. In such a situation—under the restoration of a Jewish administration at the ancient capital of Judah—it was natural that there should be a resurgence of patriotism, and a return to the old calendar and regnal year of Judah. Further, a document from a Jewish colony in Egypt, written in the same

century with Ezra and Nehemiah, shows that these Jews in Egypt also used a Jewish calendar year beginning in the fall.

## **VI. Archeology and the Postexilic Calendar**

**Jewish Documents From Egypt.**—This last-mentioned document is one of over 100, written in Aramaic on papyrus, that have been found on the island of Elephantine in the Nile River, in the ruins of a border garrison town settled by Jewish mercenaries and their families. These Aramaic papyri from Elephantine (sometimes inaccurately referred to as the Assuan Papyri) form one of the most interesting collections of ancient documents. They are wills, deeds, contracts, letters, and other documents, coming from the 5th century b.c., the century of Ezra and Nehemiah. In these papers we find not only references to the public and private affairs of the local Jews but also mention of such intriguing items as the Jews in Palestine, the Passover, an official mentioned in the Bible, and a Jewish temple on Elephantine built by the colonists. These papyri, some of which were found still rolled up and sealed, show us the exact form of the language used by the Jews after the Exile—Aramaic, a language closely akin to Hebrew, used internationally in Babylonia and throughout the Persian Empire. They also show us the very spelling and handwriting, the ink and “paper,” of the sort used in the time of the returning exiles, and the legal phraseology of a royal decree of a kind similar to those quoted from the Persian archives in the book of Ezra—the Aramaic passages that were regarded by critics as proving the unhistorical character of the book.

Indeed, these ancient papyri from Elephantine stirred up much difference of opinion, and were even regarded as forgeries in some quarters because of the unusual form of the date lines many of them bore—double dates in two calendars with sometimes apparently conflicting regnal-year numbers. But these double dates proved to be excellent evidence of their genuineness, for they synchronize the Egyptian and Jewish calendar dates in a way that enables us to calculate the very days on which they were written. These dates corroborate the chronology of the reigns of that period as reckoned in Ptolemy’s Canon. The Jewish colonists of Elephantine had been in Egypt before Cyrus’ successor, Cambyses, conquered the country and made it part of the Persian Empire. Whether they first arrived as exiles after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, as did the group who took the prophet Jeremiah with them, we do not know; but the references to religion in these papers reveal the same conditions that Jeremiah deplored—the mingling of paganism with the worship of Jehovah. In the Jewish temple at Elephantine Jehovah was worshiped along with pagan deities.

Not only are the dates and contents of these Jewish documents interesting; their date lines furnish information about the Jewish calendar of the period.

**Local Calendars Retained Under Persian Rule.**—When Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon, he did not incorporate Babylonia into Persia under a provincial government; rather he annexed the kingdom to his earlier domain and took the title of king of Babylon in addition to his title of king of Media and Persia. In Babylonia the Persians adopted the language and culture of the country and took over the Babylonian calendar. In fact the Babylonian priests, the custodians of the accumulated astronomical knowledge of centuries, and of the calendar system, flourished under Persian protection and made further advance in the regulation of the calendar.

Similarly, when Cyrus’ son Cambyses added Egypt to the Persian Empire, he continued the machinery of Egyptian government, but had himself crowned king of Egypt. Then he

ruled the country through a governor who was nominally the viceroy of the Persian "Pharaoh," retaining the local legal system and the Egyptian calendar. In later times the Romans were to follow the similar policy of allowing the use of various older local calendars in the eastern provinces, although eventually throughout the empire these calendars were adjusted to the Julian year of 365 1/4 days, that is, the local month names were retained but the lengths were adjusted to 30 and 31 days, etc., like the Roman months.

Under Persian rule in Egypt it seems that legal papers were drawn up in accordance with the local laws and dated by the native calendar; these papyrus documents from Elephantine, with a few exceptions, bore date lines carrying the Egyptian month and day, and the regnal year of the Persian king reckoned by the Egyptian solar calendar (beginning with the month Thoth). This was a sensible procedure, for two ordinary citizens signing a contract in Egypt could not be expected to know when their payments should fall due or the contract expire if the date were given in terms of a foreign calendar. But these particular documents were drawn up by Jews living in a Jewish community, using their own calendar, differing from that of Egypt. Therefore many of these papyri bore double dates, not only in the official Egyptian calendar, but also in the Jewish calendar. For example, one was dated "on the 18th of Elul, that is, the 28th day of Pachons, year 15 of King Xerxes." This means that the document was signed on a day that was the 18th of the Jewish lunar month of Elul and was also the 28th of the Egyptian month Pachons in the 15th year of the reign of the Persian king Xerxes. Another reads, "on the 24th of Shebat, year 13, that is the 9th day of Athyr, year 14 of Darius [II] the king." This gives *two* year numbers. The date was in year 13 in the Jewish calendar, but in the Egyptian calendar another year had already begun; hence this same date was in the Jewish year 13 and the Egyptian year 14 of Darius II.

These double dates show that the various peoples of the Persian Empire used their own calendars. Although under Persian rule, the Egyptians retained their solar calendar (indeed, they always retained it, and bequeathed the 365-day year to Rome and, through Rome, to us). Further, the Jews, as a minority in Egypt, were free to use their own calendar, although it was different from that of Egypt. The legal dating for these documents seems to have been the Egyptian form, for if only one date was given, it was generally in the Egyptian formula, with the king's year reckoned by the Egyptian calendar. Many of them, however, bore double dates, both Egyptian and Jewish.

**The Problem of Reconstructing an Ancient Calendar.**—Since the Egyptian calendar for this period is known, the Julian equivalent of the Egyptian date can be located. Even if the year is unknown it can be derived from the synchronism of the lunar with the solar date, for the lunar date, moving at least 10 days in one year, can agree with the Egyptian solar date only once in about 25 years. Thus these double-dated papyri can be dated in the Julian b.c. scale. By the use of these established dates as check points, a tabulation of the Jewish calendar as used in Egypt can be reconstructed for a large part of the 5th century with a greater degree of accuracy than can be done for that of Babylon, although the Babylonian calendar can be outlined, approximately, for a much longer period. For the Egyptian and Julian calendars, see Vol. I, pp. 176, 177.

Since the dates of many of these papyri can be determined within the range of a day, in each case the dates of that whole month are known with the same precision. There is a possibility of a discrepancy of one day, sometimes two, in the exact dating of the other

months of that year if the beginning of the month still depended on the observation of the moon. The time of the astronomical new moon (conjunction) for each of these months can be computed almost exactly from modern lunar tables (see p. 123, note); but the interval between the invisible conjunction and the visible crescent is variable. If we wish to find the dates of ancient Jewish months, we can compute from astronomical tables the approximate times of conjunction for any year in antiquity, and can estimate the first of the new month by taking into account the hour of conjunction by Jerusalem local time, and the speed and angle of the moon. But we can never be certain of complete accuracy in reconstructing that ancient calendar year as it actually operated, for we cannot be sure that we know all the variable factors in the observation of the crescent (see pp. 115, 116), nor do we know whether the year was reckoned by calculation or observation during the period covered by the Aramaic papyri from Elephantine.

R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein have reconstructed an outline of Babylonian chronology, beginning in 626 b.c. In this monograph they have published Babylonian calendar tables covering a number of centuries, based on certain fixed dates and on certain 13th months attested from ancient records, and elsewhere on computed dates. These tables are very useful as an approximation. The user must allow for an uncertainty in some cases as to where the 13th months were inserted, and allow for an error of plus or minus one day in some of the months. And this is reasonable accuracy for reconstructing an ancient lunar calendar.

Since so many variable elements are involved in locating the first day of the month, the location of the remaining days in each month is similarly uncertain; consequently, the full moon (which can be fixed approximately by astronomical computation) does not always come on the same day of the lunar month. In the period of these papyri it varied from the 13th to the 15th.

Even at points where an ancient record fixes beyond question a lunar date or series of dates, the calendar cannot be reconstructed beyond that particular year without the occasional possibility of being a month off if the location of the 13th month is unknown. Not until the early 4th century b.c. did the Babylonians insert their 7 extra months always in the same years of each 19-year cycle, and we do not know that the Jews had a similarly regular cycle.

However, when there are ancient source documents, we can be fairly certain. If we have Babylonian tablets indicating that a particular year had 13 months, the calendar months of that Babylonian year can be identified with reasonable certainty; and if we have a synchronism identifying a day of a given lunar month with a day of a known calendar, as in the Jewish double-dated papyri from Egypt, even the days of that month can be known. That is why, for a considerable period in the 5th century b.c., the Jewish calendar as used by the writers of these papyri can be reconstructed with approximate accuracy. Such a calendar has been reconstructed by Lynn H. Wood and Siegfried H. Horn, giving the first day of each Jewish month from 472 to 400 b.c. (For this calendar, see Vol. III, pp. 108, 109.)

**Jewish Calendar in Egypt.**—A study of this tabulation and of the 14 double-dated papyri on which it is based makes clear the following 12 characteristics of the postexilic Jewish calendar:

1. These Jews dated by their own Jewish calendar, differing slightly from the Babylonian system.

2. Unlike the Persians, but like the Jewish repatriates at Jerusalem (Neh. 1:1; 2:1; see p. 117), they reckoned the years of the king's reign from the autumn rather than from the spring.
  3. Unlike the Egyptians, but after the old custom of Judah, they regarded the interval from the accession of the king until the next New Year's Day as the "accession year" (see p. 138), after which the "first year" of the reign began.
  4. They had adopted, in Aramaic spelling, the Babylonian month names, all 12 of which appear in these papyri.
  5. Although there is no mention of a second Adar, the intervals between the dates of certain papyri indicate the use of a 13th month at various times.
  6. If they did not know a fixed 19-year cycle as such, they evidently used its equivalent in that the intervals between these double-dated papyri imply an average of seven 13-month years in every 19 years.
  7. These Jewish 13th months probably fell most often in the same years as in the Babylonian calendar. In the aforementioned Horn-Wood tabulation (see Vol. III, pp. 108, 109) they are the same months as those in Parker and Dubberstein's tables (*Babylonian Chronology*, 1956 ed.) with a very few exceptions, such as when the Babylonians inserted a second Elul instead of a second Adar in the 17th year of their cycle (as they came to do regularly—and, in later times, invariably—after the Babylonian cycle became fixed).
  8. These Jews seem not to have used the second Elul. Of three papyri dated in 17th years, where we should expect it, two do not prove the practice, and one proves definitely that they did not reckon a second Elul in that year.
  9. The evidence is not at present fully conclusive that the calendar was based on computation rather than observation of the moon, for the relation of the calendar dates to the moon have been interpreted in either way because of variable factors. But there are indications that it was computed to some degree.
  10. Although there is no conclusive proof of computation of the lengths of the months at this period (No. 9), it is interesting to note that a possible fixed sequence of 30-day and 29-day months from Nisan to Tishri, which would have allowed the same number of days between Passover and Tabernacles, is compatible with the dates of these papyri. A reconstructed calendar based on this sequence is reasonably consistent with the actual motions of the moon.
  11. The 1st of Nisan seems to have been kept, so far as the years represented by these papyri are concerned, from moving earlier than the vernal equinox. That is, if the month following Adar began before the equinox, it was made the 2d Adar, and Nisan was postponed until the next month. (This contradicts the later opinion of the rabbis that in the postexilic period the Passover came at the first full moon after the vernal equinox.)
  12. There is no indication of the practice of adjusting the length of the year to prevent certain feasts from falling on certain days of the week, as was done in the later, fixed calendar published long after the time of Christ.
- The Jewish colonists in Egypt who wrote these papyri were in correspondence with their returned brethren in Palestine, but we do not know whether they were in close enough contact to enable them to keep the insertion of the 13th month in exact synchronism with the reckoning followed at Jerusalem.

It is remarkable that these double-dated papyri, which could not have survived at Jerusalem, but which have been preserved in the drier climate of a distant Jewish outpost in Egypt, have now come forth to give us a glimpse of the postexilic calendar in operation. These documents show the Jews (1) holding to their own way of reckoning, which was independent of that of their Egyptian neighbors; (2) differing from the Babylonian system of their Persian overlords, which many scholars have assumed that they slavishly adopted. Nor do these Jews seem to know anything of certain rules attributed to them by the much later traditions of the Mishnah and Gemara (see p. 107, note 2) in the early centuries of the Christian Era.

## **VII. Different From Later Rabbinical Calendar**

The Jewish calendar and sectarian variants in the intertestamental and New Testament periods lie beyond the range of this article. But in the Mishnah, and then the Gemara, written in the early Christian centuries, we find a few bits of information concerning the Jewish calendar at the end of the 2d century a.d. and later, most of it in the form of traditions of earlier practices. It is in the Mishnah that we find accounts of the examination of witnesses before the Sanhedrin as to the appearance of the crescent, and the announcement of the new month to outlying regions by means of fire signals. The questions asked regarding the exact form of the crescent would seem to indicate that the first barely visible crescent was probably not counted; some say the "horned" phase, indicating that a longer interval might have been reckoned from conjunction to crescent. Other questions seem to indicate that the examiners were less interested in seeking information than in eliciting confirmation of knowledge that they already had by calculation, and that the formal procedure of visibly noting the new moon was carried on from precedent long after the principles to calculate its appearance were known. In the Talmudic arguments, some doubtless dating from as late as the 5th century a.d., later concepts are sometimes applied erroneously to earlier times; therefore these conflicting traditional authorities must be used with caution. For example, the belief that the 16th of Nisan could move back almost to the spring equinox is opposed to the facts of the barley harvest and to the evidence of the source documents from the postexilic period. Traditional references to the full moon of the Passover may indicate efforts to stabilize the month in relation to the full moon, at least in Nisan, but the 5th-century b.c. papyri give no hint of this. It is quite likely that in the period of the second Temple the months were at least partly regulated by something more than simple observation from month to month, but we cannot be sure from the available sources how early and to what extent computation was employed.

Eventually, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and the dispersion and persecution of the Jews by later emperors, the practice of regulating the calendar from Jerusalem was necessarily abandoned, and an arbitrary scheme was substituted, so that Jews in all lands could reckon the dates of the sacred feasts uniformly. Thenceforth the Jews in Babylonia or anywhere else could regulate the calendar by artificial means, regardless of the barley harvest in Judea or the appearance of the moon at Jerusalem. It was once thought that the calendar as revised, supposedly in the 4th century, had come down unchanged to the present day, but most authorities now think that the reform was a gradual growth, taking several centuries, incorporating earlier traditions and later developments. Some of the medieval disputes between the rabbinical advocates of the fixed calendar and the Karaites, who attempted to retain observation and the barley



harvest rule, indicate that the question of the calendar was still a live issue. The present sequence of the seven 13-month years in each 19-year cycle, and the numbering of years consecutively from a supposed era of creation, were not adopted by the Jews until the Middle Ages.

### **Bibliography**

Most of the treatises on the Jewish calendar in reference books are, on the whole, unsatisfactory, being either out of date, or concerned mostly with the post-Biblical form of the calendar rather than that of Bible times, or based on theories of a supposed late date for the Mosaic law or the purely Babylonian character of the postexilic calendar. The nontechnical reader, however, does not wish to be directed to scattered bits of source material. Therefore this list is short.

*The Babylonian Talmud*. [Soncino English translation.] Edited by I. Epstein. 34 vols. London: The Soncino Press, 1935–48. The Talmud includes the Oral Law, or Mishnah, alternating section by section with the Gemara, or extended exposition of the Mishnah by comments, additions, and various interpretations of the rabbis in Babylonia from the 3d to the 5th century. The tractate *Rosh Hashanah* (in the volume Seder Mo'ed VII) deals with the New Year festival and with certain aspects of the calendar. Representing later traditions, it does not directly concern the Old Testament calendar.

Burnaby, Sherrard Beaumont. *Elements of the Jewish and Muhammadan Calendars*. London: George Bell & Sons, 1901. 554 pp. An extended discussion (pp. 1–364), out of date but containing helpful information here and there, although much of it pertains to the rabbinical and modern Jewish calendar.

Horn, Siegfried H., and Wood, Lynn H. *The Chronology of Ezra 7*. 2d ed., rev. Washington: Review and Herald, 1970. 192 pp. This work, by two contributors to this commentary, is primarily concerned with another subject but contains chapters on “Ancient Civil Calendars,” “The Pre-exilic Hebrew Calendar,” and “The Postexilic Jewish Calendar,” also a detailed explanation of the dates of the Elephantine papyri. Though dealing indirectly with the Jewish calendar, it gives source documentation and refers to authorities on many specific points that have a bearing on this subject. The revised edition contains the reconstructed calendar tables, based on the Elephantine papyri, that appear in this commentary, Vol. III, pp. 108, 109.

Parker, Richard A., and Dubberstein, Waldo H., *Babylonian Chronology, 626 b.c.-A.D. 75*. Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1956. 47 pp. This contains a tabulation of the first of each month of the Babylonian calendar for this period as estimated from new-moon tables, indicating the known 13th months as attested by ancient source evidence. It is a useful approximation of the lunar-calendar dates for Babylon, though allowance must be made for an error of one day in some months resulting from elements of uncertainty. Besides, in using these Babylonian tables for dates in Palestine, two kinds of discrepancy are possible at certain times: (1) a day's difference, if the crescent could be seen at Jerusalem a day earlier than at Babylon because of the difference in longitude; and (2) a month's difference, if the 13th month was not always inserted at the same time in the Babylonian and Jewish calendars.

### ***Bible Chronology From Exodus to Exile***

Like all other ancient time records, those of the Bible present problems. In the first place, the records are often incomplete. In the second, we cannot always be sure that we know the method by which the ancients reckoned; for example, whether they reckoned the year

as beginning in the spring or the autumn, or whether inclusive reckoning was used in such a phrase as “three years.” Again, it is not always possible to synchronize Biblical with secular chronology.

For these and other reasons that might be given, it is not possible to prepare a complete and exact scheme of Bible chronology. However, it *is* possible to construct a tentative chronological outline, particularly for the reigns of the Hebrew kings, that can be of great help to the Bible student.

Such a chronological outline for the Exodus-to-Exile period is given on pages 36 and 77. The purpose of this article is to set forth reasons for the choice of the dates given in that outline. The following pages survey the source data, discuss the principles and methods used by scholars in constructing ancient chronology, and explain the application of these principles to chronological problems of this period of Bible history. It should be added that learned men have differed in their conclusions on Bible chronology, and that this article does not set forth in full any chronological scheme yet published.

### **I. The Conquest of Canaan**

**The Territory East of the Jordan.**—When the hosts of Israel turned finally from Kadesh toward the Promised Land they came to Mt. Hor, where Aaron died and where they mourned for him 30 days (Num. 20:22–29). The date of his death was the 1st day of the 5th month, in the 40th year of the Exodus (Num. 33:38). Thus, presumably, they did not leave Mt. Hor until the beginning of the 6th month. After several stops they reached the territory of Sihon, king of the Amorites, east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Being refused passage, they conquered Sihon’s land from the Arnon to the Jabbok. They also took the territory north of the Jabbok, that is, Gilead and Bashan (Num. 21:21–35), and then returned to camp east of the Jordan opposite Jericho. This must have been a short campaign, because after this occurred the incident of Balaam, the idolatry and punishment of the Israelites, and the numbering of the people, all before the 1st day of the 11th month of the 40th year, when Moses began his final discourses, recounting to Israel their past experiences and admonishing them as to their future course (Deut. 1:3–5). Then Moses died, probably about the beginning of the 12th month, for after mourning for him 30 days (Deut. 34:5–8) the Israelites proceeded on their way, in the first days of the first month, and crossed the Jordan on the 10th of the month (Joshua 4:19). This entry into Canaan on the 10th, and the observance of the Passover on the 14th, were obviously in the 41st year of the Exodus (see list of events in Vol. I, p. 187). Thus the period of the wanderings was one of 40 full years, extending from the midnight deliverance from Egypt on the 15th of the 1st month in the 1st year of the period, to the first Passover in the land of Canaan, following the crossing of the Jordan in the 41st year. But the conquest of Amorite territory before crossing the river occurred in the second half of the 40th year.

This last date is important because it establishes, in relation to the Exodus, the date of the entry into Canaan, and pegs down a landmark from which a period is reckoned in the time of the judges—Jephthah’s 300 years from the occupation of Sihon’s city of Heshbon and its surrounding territory.

**The Conquest of Canaan Proper.**—In the 41st year, then, according to this Exodus reckoning, Joshua led the armies of Israel in several campaigns to subdue the land west of the river. His forces included a contingent from the tribes that were to settle in the Transjordan territory recently won from the Amorites. The land was not completely

conquered during this war, for the Israelites could not drive out the inhabitants of many of the strongly fortified cities, and many of those conquered in the first campaigns were not held permanently. Yet the country was subdued sufficiently to halt opposition to the settlement of the Israelites. Even after “Joshua took the whole land,” and “the land rested from war” (Joshua 11:23), he told the Israelites that “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (ch. 13:1). Ending the armed opposition and allotting the land to the tribes was not the same thing as actually possessing the whole land; this was not accomplished fully until the time of David. But the first stage was completed in the matter of a few years.

**The Assemblies at Gilgal and Shiloh.**—After the division of most of the land had been completed, the Israelites assembled at Gilgal, where the Passover had first been observed and the tabernacle had been set up. On this occasion the aged Caleb asked for the region of Hebron as his allotment of territory (Joshua 14:6–15). He stated that he was 40 years old when he went with the spies from Kadesh-barnea (in the second year of the Exodus), and that now he was 85 years old. This occasion was therefore in the 46th or 47th year from the Exodus. Since the first campaigns east of the Jordan began in the 40th year, this would make the wars of Canaan last six or seven years. Further distribution of the land by lot (chs. 15–17) was followed by the setting up of the tabernacle at Shiloh (ch. 18:1). If this took place immediately after the assembly at Gilgal mentioned in ch. 14:6, it was soon after the seven-year war.

This commentary uses a dating of the Hebrew kings that puts the spring of Solomon’s year 4 in 966 b.c., in the 480th year from the Exodus. Then the Exodus, in the 1st year of that period, 479 years earlier, was in 1445 b.c., and thus the conquest of Heshbon and the other Amorite territory late in 1406, the crossing of the Jordan in the spring of 1405, and the gathering at Gilgal after the war in Canaan, in 1400 or 1399.

The uncertainty in this last date stems from the question of whether Caleb, in speaking of his age as 85, counted the years from the spring or the fall; he did not specifically refer to the years of the Exodus, but was reckoning his own age. The Exodus reckoning, as an era, was used by Moses, but it does not seem to have survived as a means of dating, except in the case of Solomon’s 4th year (1 Kings 6:1). Although the months were always numbered from Abib (later called Nisan), in the spring, the years were generally reckoned from the fall (see pp. 109, 110). The gathering at Gilgal, presumably at a regular feast, could have been at the Feast of Tabernacles in 1400 b.c., the Passover in 1399, or the Feast of Tabernacles in 1399.

Following this meeting at Gilgal, the tabernacle was moved to Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), where the final allotment of territory was made to the remaining tribes. There is no indication of the interval between the meeting at Gilgal and the one at Shiloh. The tabernacle was moved not earlier than 1400, and presumably not much later than 1399.

**Joshua’s Death and the Ensuing Apostasy.**—The next chronological item, an uncertain one, is the death of Joshua at the age of 110 (Joshua 24:29). It was “many days” after the end of the war that Joshua called the people together, and told them, “Behold, I have divided unto you ... an inheritance for your tribes” (Joshua 23:4), and bade them farewell with, “Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth” (v. 14). If this was soon after the division of the land at Gilgal and Shiloh, then Joshua was nearing 110 years of age at the time Caleb was 85, was about 65 when he acted as one of the 12 spies, and was a centenarian when he led the Israelites into Canaan. If, however, he was about Caleb’s

age, his death took place 25 years after the end of the war. Thus the interval between the entry into Canaan and the first judge has a wide margin of uncertainty. In either case, we must allow a considerable period after Joshua's death before the first judges, for it was after the apostasy of the generation that succeeded Joshua that the oppressions began, and the judges were raised up to deliver the Israelites. Apostasy was appallingly rapid (see on Judges 18:30 for the conditions in the lifetime of a possible grandson of Moses), but it must have taken at least several decades for the younger contemporaries of Joshua to die out. It was after "all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel," that "the children of Israel did evil" and forsook the God of their fathers, so that the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and then raised up judges who repeatedly delivered them and sought to bring them back to the worship of God (see ch. 2:10–16).

## II. The Period of the Judges

The chronology of the period of the judges presents problems if we attempt to place all the events in consecutive order. There is no need to doubt the figures, but the problem of harmonizing them with the events described in the end of the book of Joshua and the beginning of 1 Samuel has given rise to varying opinions and solutions. The account is so abbreviated that we do not have all the facts concerning the relationship between the various judges and the intervening periods of oppression. The fact that the story of one judge is told without a hint that there was any other judge in another part of the land at the same time does not rule out the possibility of contemporary judges.

**The Data of the Book of Judges.**—The writer of Judges did not set out to give all the details of the history of his period; his purpose was to show how the Israelites repeatedly forsook God and fell a prey to their enemies, were in turn rescued and given another opportunity. Whether these events happened successively or contemporaneously in different sections of the country had no bearing on the lesson of the book, and so the writer did not supply all the details of the timing, although he preserved carefully the number of years of each judge and of the periods of oppression. They are given as follows:

|                                         |           |         |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Joshua and the elders that outlived him | $x$ years | ch. 2:7 |
| Oppression under Cushan-rishathaim      | 8 "       | " 3:8   |
| Deliverance by Othniel; the land rests  | 40 "      | " 3:11  |
| Oppression by Eglon of Moab             | 18 "      | " 3:14  |
| Deliverance by Ehud; the land rests     | 80 "      | " 3:30  |
| Oppression by Jabin and the Canaanites  | 20 "      | " 4:3   |
| Deliverance by Deborah; the land        | 40 "      | " 5:31  |

|                                               |      |           |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|-----------|
| rests                                         |      |           |
| Oppression by the Midianites                  | 7 “  | “ 6:1     |
| Deliverance by Gideon; the land rests         | 40 “ | “ 8:28    |
| Abimelech reigns over Israel                  | 3 “  | “ 9:22    |
| Tola judges Israel                            | 23 “ | “ 10:2    |
| Jair judges Israel                            | 22 “ | “ 10:3    |
| Oppression by the Ammonites (and Philistines) | 18 “ | “ 10:7, 8 |
| Deliverance by Jephthah                       | 6 “  | “ 12:7    |
| Ibzan judges Israel                           | 7 “  | “ 12:9    |
| Elon judges Israel                            | 10 “ | “ 12:11   |
| Abdon judges Israel                           | 8 “  | “ 12:14   |
| Oppression by the Philistines                 | 40 “ | “ 13:1    |
| Samson judges Israel                          | 20 “ | “ 15:20   |

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410 plus x

The  $x$  years represent the unknown period, probably several decades, during which the Israelites “served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua” (Judges 2:7), and then apostatized. Even leaving out the  $x$  years preceding the first oppression, we have a total of 319 years to the end of the 18 years of Ammonite invasion, which Jephthah spoke of as 300 years. This 319 plus  $x$  may well be 350 or more; and the total of 410 plus  $x$  for the whole sum of the years of the judges and the intervening periods of oppression is probably more than 450. Evidently not all these periods were successive.

**Some Periods Overlap.**—The record clearly indicates an overlapping of some of these judgeships and servitudes. The 20 years of Samson fell within the 40 years of Philistine oppression, for “he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years” (Judges 15:20). Further, in connection with the statement that the Philistines oppressed Israel 40 years (ch. 13:1), it was foretold that Samson would only “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines” (v. 5). If, then, Samson’s 20 years are part of the 40, the total is reduced from 410 plus  $x$  to 390 plus  $x$ .

But the 40 years of the Philistines oppression seem to have been partly contemporaneous with the 18 years of servitude to the Ammonites, for it is said that “the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon” (ch. 10:7). Then follows the description of the Ammonite oppression and the deliverance by Jephthah (chs. 10:8 to 12:7), and after this an enumeration of the three judges who succeeded him, evidently unimportant characters of whom little more is recorded than the duration of their judgeships, totaling 25 years

(ch. 12:8–15); then chapter 13 returns to the 40-year Philistine oppression to recount the life of Samson, and how he “began” to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Thus the Scripture indicates that the Philistine oppression and the Ammonite oppression were contemporaneous. The Ammonites, inhabiting the Transjordan plateau toward the edge of the desert, swept over the eastern tribes of Israel (for Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh lived east of the Jordan), and continued their pillaging for 18 years. Finally they invaded the territory of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim west of the Jordan (ch. 10:8, 9; cf. PP 557). The Israelites, thus harassed from the east, had no opportunity to employ their united strength to defend the west, where the Philistines on the southern portion of the seacoast raided Judah and Dan and threatened the western tribes.

**Other Periods Probably Contemporaneous.**—It is obvious that if some of these periods in the book of Judges were contemporaneous, as the record seems to indicate, it is likely that some of the others also were simultaneous, occurring in different parts of the land, even though we cannot tell which periods overlap and for how long. This seems all the more likely when we notice that these judges were widely scattered geographically: Othniel was from Judah, Deborah from Ephraim, Barak from Naphtali, Ehud from Benjamin, Gideon from Manasseh, Tola from Issachar, Jair and Jephthah from Gilead, east of the Jordan, Ibzan and Elon from Zebulum, Abdon from Ephraim, and Samson from Dan. During this period the tribes were living in widely scattered territories largely in mountainous terrain separated by areas held by Canaanites, whom they had never succeeded in driving completely from the land, and whose fortresses held the main routes of communication in the lowlands. It is doubtful that any of these judges ruled over any large portion of the Israelites. The record reveals that even in a time of crisis, when a deliverer was fighting to repel the oppressors, not all the tribes rallied to drive out the invaders. The reason may be that not all the tribes were oppressed at any one time, and that consequently the deliverers were more or less local.

**Jephthah's 300 Years.**—Further, if Jephthah's 300-year estimate of the time of the Hebrew occupation of the towns of the Amorites is anywhere near exact, there was necessarily an overlapping of the periods up to his time, for the total, excluding the time of Joshua and the surviving elders is 319 years.

It is not necessary to assume that Jephthah's 300-year statement was exact, since he was at the time contending with the Ammonite invaders, and in the heat of controversy he doubtless did not stop to look up any records or consult a tribal “rememberer” to get the exact figure, but used a round number. This number was likely rounded off to the hundred above the actual total rather than to less than the exact interval. But it is also possible that the elapsed time was exactly 300 years when Jephthah spoke. If it was, we have the exact date, in relation to the Exodus, since the towns of Heshbon were taken from Sihon, king of the Amorites, in the 40th year of the Exodus (1406/05 b.c., according to the dating of the Exodus utilized for this commentary). Then 300 years, inclusive, from the acquisition of that territory would be 1107/06 b.c.

**The Later Judges.**—If the 40 years of Philistine oppression ended with the battle of Ebenezer (1 Sam. 7:5–14), the most likely event to terminate this period, then the judgeships following Jephthah must have overlapped also, probably more extensively than those before him. Samson would be a contemporary of Jephthah; and Eli, who died after 40 years as judge (see ch. 4:4, 11, 18), 20 years before the battle of Ebenezer (see chs. 6:1; 7:1, 2, 11–14), must have been older than either Jephthah or Samson. If the ark

was in Shiloh some 300 years (PP 514), reckoned from a point 6 or 7 years later than the beginning of Jephthah's 300 years, and was taken from Shiloh to the battle in which it was captured by the Philistines, then the death of Eli following this battle took place about the time of Jephthah. The ark, returned by the Philistines, was placed at Kirjath-jearim, where it had been 20 years at the time the Israelites won their decisive victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer.

It was at that time that Samuel was made judge (ch. 7:6, 15–17). We are not told how long Samuel's judgeship lasted, but we do know that it closed the whole period of the judges. Some take it as ending with the coronation of Saul, when the monarchy replaced the theocratic government of the judges, but some extend it to Samuel's death, since he continued to function as a judge (ch. 7:15) although the judge was no longer the chief magistrate after the monarchy was set up. Nothing is recorded of Samuel's age, except that he was born when Eli was no longer young; that he received his first message from God while he was still a boy; that he was old enough to be known as a prophet before Eli's death (ch. 3), though he was apparently young enough to be passed by as judge until 20 years later (ch. 7). A fragmentary manuscript from a Dead Sea cave, containing parts of 1 Sam. 1 and 2, gives Eli's age as 90, not at his death (as in LXX), but at some time after Samuel was placed in his care (see on ch. 2:22). If Samuel was about 3 when brought to Eli (see 1 Sam. 1:24; cf. EGW, RH, Sept. 8, 1904), he was at least 11 when Eli died at 98. This fragment may preserve an original figure, later lost, but we cannot build on this assumption. Samuel was judge long enough to be an old man who had already relinquished at least part of his work to his sons before the Israelites demanded a king (ch. 8:1–5). If he lived through the greater part of Saul's reign, as the record indicates, he must have been very old when he died. Samuel is the link between the period of the judges and that of the monarchy. Thus it would seem that the first part of the book of 1 Samuel covers a period contemporary with the last part of the book of Judges, presumably chapters 10–16.

**The Judges and the 480 Years.**—With such overlaps as are here indicated, it is entirely possible that the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, the period of the elders that outlived Joshua, the subsequent apostasy, the various judgeships, some of them contemporaneous, including the judgeship of Samuel, and the reigns of Saul and David could have occurred within the space of 480 years, as indicated in 1 Kings 6:1. There is no way of computing exactly the length of the period of the judges, or the specific overlaps, but a tentative outline of the period that fits this chronology has been included in the article on history, on page 36. This outline is intended only as an approximation of what may have happened, but it demonstrates that the figures in the book of Judges can be reasonably interpreted by means of overlaps that agree with the historical situation and with the interpretation of the 480 years as the exact length of the period from the Exodus to and including the 4th year of Solomon.

Those who follow the longer chronology of the judges, and make all the periods consecutive throughout, interpret the 480 years as the sum of the actual judgeships, excluding the periods of oppression or usurpation (see Vol. I, p. 190), and take the total period as being more than 500 years. This results in an earlier date for the Exodus. One system of dating formerly employed by some "fundamentalist" writers, with the successive periods of the book of Judges, arrives at a total of 594 years from the Exodus to the 4th year of Solomon by interpreting the 480 years as the total number of the "years

of the Theocracy” during which Israel was really under God-appointed government, not counting the six periods of servitude and the three years of the usurpation of Abimelech. By overlapping Eli with the Philistine servitude and Samuel with Eli, it arrives at the x years of Joshua’s successors as 13 years by subtraction. This scheme, which requires assumptions concerning which there is no evidence, to say the least, has never gained standing in the world of Biblical scholarship.

The marginal dates that have appeared in many editions of the KJV since 1701, derived from the chronology of Archbishop Ussher, first published in 1650 (see Vol. I, pp. 179, 195), place the Exodus in 1491 b.c.; the first judge, Othniel, in 1406; and the beginning of Saul’s reign in 1095. This dating is arrived at by placing the 4th year of Solomon, as the 480th from the Exodus, in 1012 b.c. This b.c. date is based on interregna (see p. 140) between the kings, also on Ussher’s conjecture that the completion of the Temple (1004) was 1,000 years before the birth of Christ.

Many scholars regard the 480 years as merely meaning 12 generations, estimated at 40 years each. This would be equivalent to throwing out the number 480 entirely, for an *estimate* of 12 generations cannot be a basis for a specific time statement of an exact “480th year.”

If “in the 480th year” is not meant to refer to a specific year, but to a general approximation, how are we to know that “in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat,” or “in the seventh year of Artaxerxes,” or “in the eleventh year of Zedekiah” is anything but an estimate? When the Bible gives exact statements of time, and on these statements can be built a detailed chronology without alteration, there seems to be no adequate reason for assuming that they are not based on exact data. It is admitted that Bible writers may use round numbers at times, especially in the case of the number 40, but such a possibility should not weigh against actual figures that harmonize with other figures to make exact synchronisms as they stand, nor is there any reason to doubt that when a writer puts an event *in* a certain specific year he means that very year.

It is true that many writers who do not accept the Bible as accurate history revise the figures wherever they please, to suit their own theories. Some of them reduce the time of the judges to even shorter periods by regarding 1 Kings 6:1 as an error; those who place the Exodus in the 12th or 13th century must of necessity do this. But this is not constructing a chronology based on the Bible data; it is a revision of the Bible records according to each individual’s theory. Since this commentary is intended to explain the Bible, not to revise it, any chronology incorporated into it must be based on the Biblical figures; if they cannot be explained consistently, it must be admitted that we do not have a complete Biblical chronology. Therefore the 480 years are to be included in the picture. This commentary employs the simpler interpretation of the so-called 480 years, inclusive (the phrase is not “480 years,” but “the 480th year”), as literal and exact, ending with the 4th year of Solomon as the 480th year. The overlapping of the judges, which this reckoning requires, is accepted as a reasonable interpretation of the data, but no attempt is made to be dogmatic on the details of the judgeships. The outline in the history article (see p. 36) shows what may have happened, but no one knows what actually did happen, nor does that fact diminish the value of the narrative for its readers.

### **III. The United Hebrew Monarchy**

Reference has been made (p. 129) to the indefiniteness of our information on the relation of the beginning of the monarchy to the time of Samuel and the earlier judges. The Old



Testament contains no clear statement as to the length of Saul's reign, but any difference of opinion on this period would affect only the date of its beginning, for its end is fixed in relation to the reigns of David and the later line of kings.

**The Reign of Saul Variouslly Interpreted.**—The only information given in the Bible as to the length of Saul's rule (unless 1 Sam. 13:1 is so regarded; see p. 133) is the remark of the apostle Paul, made in an impromptu sermon at Antioch: "And afterward they desired a king; and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years" (Acts 13:21).

Paul had just referred to two other time periods: (1) God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, when "*about* the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness," and (2) another period of "*about* the space of four hundred and fifty years" (vs. 18, 20; italics supplied).

Some have concluded that, since Paul was thinking in round numbers, as indicated by the qualifying word "about" with these two numerals, he merely omitted to repeat the modifier with the third numeral; that he would naturally use round numbers in an oral summary, for he was not writing a history, or even consulting records for these figures. Even his phrase, "about the time of forty years" in the wilderness is an example of 40 used as a round number, since the duration of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness, after rebelling against God at Kadesh and being turned back, was actually only 38 years (see Vol. I, p. 187).

On the other hand, the fact that the third number, unlike the first two, is not qualified by "about" leads some to think that it was meant to be an exact number in contrast with the others. If so, what period did Paul intend it to cover? Some think that it extends to the beginning of David's rule over both Judah and Israel, more than 7 years after the death of Saul, and hence that the personal reign of Saul, in distinction from that of his house, was less than 40 years. The question as to whether Paul meant to indicate that Saul occupied the throne exactly 40 years cannot be settled, and it does not affect the historical accuracy of the account.

**The Ages of Saul, David, and Jonathan.**—The only reason for concern with the exact length of Saul's reign is that a total of 40 years involves apparent difficulties as to the comparative ages of Saul, David, and Jonathan, difficulties that would be avoided if 40 were a round number for a considerably shorter period. If 40 is exact, then David was born a decade after Saul came to the throne, for at the age of 30 he succeeded Saul (2 Sam. 5:4). Then, if he slew Goliath when he was as young as 18—and he could hardly have been much younger—this event took place after Saul had reigned nearly 30 years. If the battle of Michmash, in which Jonathan took a prominent part (1 Sam. 13, 14), occurred in the second year of Saul's reign (see on 1 Sam. 13:1), as the KJV has been taken to imply (although it does not actually so state), Jonathan was presumably 18 or 20 years old about a decade before David was born. This makes the close and brotherly friendship between an 18-year-old David and a 46-year-old Jonathan seem entirely out of harmony with the narrative. Also, on this basis, Jonathan's only son, Mephibosheth (or Merib-baal; 1 Chron. 8:34; 9:40), who was 5 years old at the time of the battle in which Saul and his sons were killed (2 Sam. 4:4; cf. 1 Sam. 29:1, 11; 31:1, 2), would have been born when Jonathan was 53. This would be rather late for Saul's heir apparent to be providing for the succession of his line. And if Jonathan was a grown man so soon after his father's accession, Saul must have been between 75 and 80, at the very least, when he

was killed in battle. None of this is impossible, but it would seem to be so unusual as to lend weight to one of two views: (1) that the figure 40 does not refer to the exact length of the personal reign of Saul, or (2) that he was quite young at the time of his accession and that the battle of Michmash must have come considerably later than the second year of his reign. Either of these two explanations would allow Saul and Jonathan to be much younger, thus eliminating the apparent difficulties in their ages.

**Various Explanations of Saul's Reign.**—If Saul's reign was less than 40 years, the question arises as to what evidence there may be for its length. Extending the 40 years to cover the time up to the coronation of David over all twelve tribes would subtract 7 1/2 years at the most. This is possible, but of course unproved.

In one instance Josephus attributes to Saul a reign of only 20 years (*Antiquities* x. 8. 4). In another instance he has Saul reign 18 years during Samuel's lifetime and 22 years after the death of the prophet (*Antiquities* vi. 14. 9). This latter statement shows variants in the manuscripts, two of the Latin texts reading 2 for 22, thus making this statement conform to the other. It has been suggested that the number 22 represents an emendation by a Christian copyist to make it conform to Paul's statement, but this is of course merely a conjecture. There seems to be no textual question about the statement from *Antiquities* x. 8. 4.

Now, if Saul reigned only 20 years, then David, who was 30 when he came to the throne (2 Sam. 5:4), would have been 10 years old at Saul's accession. There is general agreement that David was only about 18 when he slew Goliath; he was young enough to be left at home with the sheep instead of being in the army (1 Sam. 17:13, 14, 28, 33, 42), yet old enough to fight wild beasts (vs. 34–37), and is referred to as a valiant man of war (ch. 16:18). Consequently there would be only about eight years between the beginning of Saul's reign and the battle with Goliath. In that case Samuel could have died about 18 years after Saul's accession. Some regard eight years as a rather short period for the events related before the Goliath incident, and similarly object to only two years between the death of Samuel and that of Saul, since David spent a year and four months of that time among the Philistines. But the interval after Samuel's death could hardly have been much more than two years, unless 1 Sam. 25 and 26 have omitted many events. The only incidents recorded between Samuel's death and David's flight to Philistia are his journey to Paran, his encounter with Nabal, and his second encounter with Saul. These incidents would not seem to require more than eight months.

If, as some think, 1 Samuel 13:1 gives the incomplete remnant of a statement of the length of Saul's reign, and the original numeral ended in two ("... and two years he reigned"; see on 1 Sam. 13:1), it could have been 22, although 32 would seem more likely as an equivalent of the round number 40. In view of the aforementioned observations, what is to be done with Paul's statement assigning 40 years to the reign of Saul? Either this is a round number or it is not. If it is, the relative ages of David, Saul, and Jonathan can be made to appear more reasonable, but any attempt to arrive at an exact figure for the reign will be only speculation. If it is not a round number, the period is 40 years, and the unnatural disparity of ages must be accepted if we are to construct this chronology on the Bible data.

**Later Chronology Not Affected.**—In either case, any difference of opinion on the duration of Saul's reign has no effect on the date of the end of that reign or on the dates of the reigns of David and the later kings. Regardless of which scheme of chronology is

preferred for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the b.c. dating pivots on synchronisms in the latter part of the period; consequently shortening Saul's reign would merely move his accession later, and allow that much more time for the judges.

**The Reign of David.**—There is no question about the length of David's reign. Here 40 is obviously not a round number, for it is the sum of 7 and 33, and there is actual mention of an event in the 40th year of David (1 Chron. 26:31). The extra six months (2 Sam. 5:4, 5) offer no problem. It could be possible that David's entire reign, from the time that he became king in Hebron until he died, was exactly 40 years and 6 months; it is not necessary, however, to suppose this, since the reigns of ancient kings were customarily counted by calendar years; and if one died at any time in his 40th calendar year, he was said to have reigned 40 years, as will be explained later (p. 137). It is more likely that the six months were his "beginning of reign," or "accession year"—the interval between his coming to the throne and the next New Year's Day, from which his "year 1" would begin. (This method of reckoning reigns is explained on pp. 138, 139.) If the Philistines went up against Saul in the plain of Jezreel at the usual season when "kings go out to battle" (1 Chron. 20:1), Saul's death, followed by David's accession in Hebron, would have occurred in the spring, and David's first full year of reign would have begun about six months later, at the beginning of the year in the autumn.

**Solomon Made King by David.**—At the end of David's reign, "when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel" (1 Chron. 23:1). At this time he appointed officers for the Temple service and for the affairs of Israel "in all the business of the Lord, and in the service of the king" (ch. 26:30). This seems to have taken place "in the fortieth year of the reign of David" (v. 31). In the last chapter of the book the reign is summarized as 7 years in Hebron and 33 in Jerusalem (1 Chron. 29:27). This would imply that Solomon's joint reign with his father continued for part of the 40th year, for if it had extended into the 41st, David would have been reckoned as reigning 41 years. This 40th year must have been counted also as Solomon's "accession year," or "year of the beginning of the reign."

**Solomon's Years From Autumn to Autumn.**—The reign of Solomon furnishes an important clue to the reckoning of the regnal years, that is, the years of the king's reign, as beginning in the autumn, in his day at least. It is explained in the article on the Hebrew calendar (see p. 109) that there were two beginnings of the year: The religious year began with the 1st of Abib (Nisan), in the spring, and the civil year with the 1st of Ethanim (Tishri), in the autumn. Since the months were always numbered from the spring, the civil fall-to-fall year began with the 7th month, with the numbers running 7–12 followed by 1–6. Thus the first month came after the middle of the civil year (see p. 116).

The Temple was begun in the 2d month of the 4th year of Solomon, and was completed in the 8th month of the 11th year (1 Kings 6:1, 37, 38). In view of the well-attested fact that the ancients were in the habit of reckoning inclusively (see p. 136), it seems surprising that an interval from the 4th to the 11th year should not be expressed here as 8 years. But since the beginning and ending dates are given, it is to be presumed that the reckoning was not by complete regnal years, but by anniversary years, that is, years reckoned from the date of the event that marks the beginning, the 2d day of the 2d month. If the 7 years are reckoned inclusively from the 2d month of the 4th year of the reign, the completion of the Temple falls in the 11th year of the reign if the regnal years begin in

the fall, but not if they begin in the spring. This has been understood as evidence that Solomon's regnal years were reckoned from the autumn, presumably Tishri 1.

**Solomon's Fourth Year Used as Basis for Exodus Date.**—This date of the beginning of the building of the Temple on “the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign” (2 Chron. 3:2) is important in relation to the time of the Exodus. According to the chronology of the kings employed in this commentary (see pp. 77, 143, 159), the 40th and last year of Solomon's reign was 931/30 b.c., counted from autumn to autumn; therefore the 4th year of the reign, 36 years earlier, was 967/66 b.c., also beginning presumably with the autumn New Year's Day, the first of Tishri, the 7th month. Since the Hebrews always numbered their months from the spring, even though the civil year began in the fall (see p. 106), the 2d month, Zif, came in the spring of 966 b.c. But this event in the month of Zif is also dated “in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kings 6:1). Thus we have a synchronism between two dating scales—the regnal years of Solomon and the years of the Exodus era (see Vol. I, pp. 186–188). Since the deliverance from Egypt took place in the middle of the 1st month in the 1st year of the Exodus reckoning, that departure can be placed 479 years earlier than the 1st month of the 480th year, that is, in the spring of 1445 b.c. Thus Solomon's reign, as dated from the later reigns of the divided kingdom, gives us in turn a date for the Exodus if we accept the 480th year as an exact figure. This is the basis for the Exodus date used in Volume I of this commentary (see Vol. I, pp. 191, 192).

#### **IV. Methods and Principles of Reckoning**

Before considering the period of the divided kingdom, which followed the death of Solomon, it may be well to pause for an explanation of the methods used in reckoning ancient reigns, and of certain terms and principles that will be used in the later discussion of the reigns of Israel and Judah.

**Chronology Built Upon Synchronisms.**—The chronological data in the books of Kings are given mostly in two types of time statements aligning the reigns of the two neighboring kingdoms of Judah and Israel, that is, (1) accession synchronisms, or statements dating the accession of one king in a certain regnal year of the contemporary ruler in the other nation; and (2) the lengths of the reigns. A typical example is seen in the record of the accession of Amaziah of Judah during the reign of Jehoash (Joash) of Israel: “In the second year of Joash ... king of Israel reigned Amaziah ... king of Judah. He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem” (2 Kings 14:1, 2).

We are told later that Amaziah outlived Jehoash 15 years (v. 17); and then comes the next accession synchronism, the statement of the accession of the next king of Israel, Jeroboam II, during Amaziah's reign: “In the fifteenth year of Amaziah ... king of Judah Jeroboam ... king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years” (v. 23).

Similar synchronisms are given for the other kings. Since the accession of each is synchronized with a regnal year of his contemporary neighbor, and the length of each reign is given, it is possible to construct an outline of the chronology of the two kingdoms based on these interlocking synchronisms. A graphic method of constructing such chronologies is to start with two parallel scales of years in diagrammatic form, and to lay out on them the two series of reigns of Israel and Judah so that (1) the accession of each

king is synchronized with the corresponding year of the contemporary ruler of the other kingdom, and (2) the recorded length of each reign is allowed for. If the pattern is correct, the end of each reign and the beginning of the next will come in the prescribed year of the reign of the other kingdom as recorded in the Bible.

Sometimes the figures in Kings can be interpreted in only one way; then the alignment is easy to determine. But in other instances more than one interpretation may be made, and various possibilities must be tried out. To begin with, this is largely a trial-and-error procedure. Where the lengths of the reigns do not fit the scheme, many have concluded that the text was erroneous. But it must be considered that there is more than one method of reckoning involved, that Israel and Judah did not necessarily use the same systems. In order to work intelligently it is necessary first to understand the methods and principles of reckoning that may have been used by the writer of Kings or in his sources. To illustrate from the time statements just quoted, relating to Amaziah and his contemporaries, the following questions must be answered—and they are not so simple as they may seem at first glance.

How did the writer count the 15 years that Amaziah lived after the death of Joash? (See next section.)

If Amaziah reigned 29 years, in what year of his reign did he die? (See p. 137.)

What is meant by his 15th year? (See p. 138.)

When does a king's "first year" begin? (See pp. 138, 139.)

Did the 15th year of Amaziah in Judah exactly coincide with the Israelite year in which Jeroboam II came to the throne? (See p. 140.)

The task of finding the answers to such questions is complicated by the fact that Judah and Israel did not employ identical systems of reckoning. The general principles of ancient reckoning that explain these questions will be found in the following paragraphs.

**Years Counted by Inclusive Reckoning.**—As already pointed out (see Vol. I, p. 182), the common mode of counting employed in the Bible seems to have been inclusive reckoning, that is, counting both the first and the last unit of time in calculating an interval. This method was also used generally by other ancient nations, as is shown unmistakably by source documents. An Egyptian inscription recording the death of a priestess on the 4th day of the 12th month relates that her successor arrived on the 15th, "when 12 days had elapsed." Today, we would say that when 12 days had elapsed after the 4th, the date would be the 16th. The Greeks followed the same inclusive method. They called the Olympiad, or the four-year period between the Olympic Games, a *pentaeteris* (five-year period), and used other similar numerical terms. The Romans also, in common usage, reckoned inclusively; they had *nundinae* (from *nonus*, ninth), or market days, every ninth day, inclusive, actually every eight days, as indicated on ancient calendars by the letters, A through H.

Of course mathematicians and astronomers were aware that the reckoning was mathematically inexact, but it persisted in common parlance, as it has even down to the present day in the Orient. Modern vestiges in the West are the phrase "eight days," meaning a week in some European languages; the Catholic term "octave" of a festival, meaning the day coming one week after the holy day; the musical intervals, such as octave, third, fifth, etc.; and even the medical term "tertian fever," meaning a fever recurring every other day.

The clearest Biblical demonstration of inclusive counting is in the New Testament (see on Acts 10:30 where a period of 72 hours is reckoned as “four days ago,” not “three”), but an Old Testament example is in 2 Kings 18:9, 10. The siege of Samaria lasted from the fourth to the sixth year of Hezekiah, which is equated with the seventh to the ninth year of Hoshea, and yet the city is said to have been taken “at the end of three years.” In modern usage we would say two years, by straight subtraction. Obviously the Bible writer reckoned inclusively (years four, five, and six totaling three years).

A Hebrew boy was circumcised when “eight days old” (Gen. 17:12), that is, “in the eighth day” (Lev. 12:3). Similarly Luke speaks of circumcision “on the eighth day” or “when eight days were accomplished” (Luke 1:59; 2:21). Evidently “when eight days were accomplished” (or “at the end of eight days,” RSV) does not mean eight full days from the date of birth, but eight inclusive.

Jeroboam II of Israel succeeded his father Jehoash in the 15th year of Amaziah of Judah (2 Kings 14:23), and Amaziah “lived after the death of Jehoash ... of Israel fifteen years” (2 Kings 14:17). A modern reader would mentally add 15 to 15, reaching Amaziah’s 30th year, yet Amaziah reigned only 29 years (v. 2). Inclusive reckoning is again the most logical explanation, since 15 years, inclusive, from the 15th year is the 29th, in which he evidently died.

There are other examples. When, at the death of Solomon, Rehoboam was petitioned to lighten the tax burden, he told the people to depart “for three days” (1 Kings 12:5) and then return for his decision “after three days” (2 Chron. 10:5). They came “the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day” (1 Kings 12:12; cf. 2 Chron. 10:12). Esther asked the Jews of Shushan to fast, and by implication, to pray, for her before she went in to the king unbidden, and then she approached the king “on the third day” (Esther 4:16; 5:1). Obviously a period of “three days” ended on the third day, not after the completion of the three days, as we would reckon it.

All this serves to explain the supposed difficulty in the three days between the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The texts are as follows:

| <i>“In three days”</i> | <i>“After three days”</i> | <i>“The third day”</i>                  |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Matt. 26:61; 27:40     | 27:63 (12:40, & 3 nights) | 9:31; 10:34; 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64 |
| Mark 14:58 (within)    | 8:31                      |                                         |
| Luke John 2:19-21      |                           | 9:22; 24:7, 21, 46                      |

It is obvious from these texts that “in three days,” “after three days,” and even “three days and three nights” are all equivalent to “on the third day.” One writer (Matthew) uses all three phrases for the same period. The interval from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning is three days, by inclusive reckoning. Since it is clear that this mode of counting was the common practice in Bible times, and widespread in many countries, it is useless to try to understand this period as three full 24-hour days, according to the modern Western habit of counting. To do so violates both historical usage and Biblical statement, and creates a

difficulty that would not exist if the ordinary usage of common speech and of examples in the Bible be taken into account.

**The Length of a King's Reign.**—Just as the common mode of expression made Noah 600 years old in his 600th year, or a child 8 days old on his 8th day, and just as a period of 3 days or 3 years ends on the 3d day or in the 3d year, although the 3d day or year is not yet completed, so a reign of 25 years was one that ended in the 25th year.

Asa of Judah was recorded as having ruled 41 years, yet he died in his 41st year (1 Kings 15:9, 10; 2 Chron. 16:13); note also the end of Zedekiah's 11-year reign *in* his 11th year (2 Kings 24:18; 2 Kings 25:2–7). This is also demonstrated by the Judah-Israel synchronisms, and was customary in Babylon and Egypt, as evidenced by documents brought to light by archeologists.

This was somewhat akin to inclusive reckoning, although the total of a reign was not always true inclusive reckoning. There were two methods of counting regnal years, one of which eliminated the inclusive numbering, and so kept the total number of years correct, as will be explained next. But the system of regnal years was not ordinary folk usage; it was a specialized form of calendar reckoning, primarily chronological in purpose.

**Regnal Years Are Calendar Years.**—When the ancients dated events in a certain year of a king's reign, they were using a calendar dating formula. They were not concerned with how long that ruler had been on the throne when the event occurred, but they used the regnal-year number as the regular designation for that calendar year. This was the common method of identifying the year, for they had no long-term era like our b.c.-a.d. dating. Accordingly, the regnal year coincided with the civil year, beginning on New Year's Day. The various nations had different calendars, and different New Year's Days (see Vol. I, pp. 176, 177), but the system of counting reigns by their respective calendar years was followed in Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt, and evidently by the Hebrews also. It seems to have been taken for granted in the ancient Near East.

Although a king's regnal years were equated with whole calendar years, the first and last of his kingship would be incomplete unless he happened to come to the throne on New Year's Day and die on the anniversary of his accession. Hence an adjustment had to be made, and there were two methods of making this adjustment as described in the immediately following paragraphs.

**Accession-Year Method of Reckoning Reigns.**—If King A died during his 35th year, and was succeeded by King B, all documents written in the first part of the year, up to A's death, would have been dated in the such and such day and month of the 35th year of King A, but during the rest of that year they would be dated in the name of his successor, King B, and the first New Year's Day in the new reign would usher in a new regnal year of King B. The difference in the two methods was concerned with the unexpired portion of the year between the accession and the following New Year's Day.

In Babylonia, for example, this partial year would be called King B's "year of beginning of reign," now known as *accession year*; and the full calendar year beginning on the next New Year's Day (Nisan 1) was numbered the *first* year of the reign. Thus in a series of reigns, the year 35 of King A would be followed by the year 1 of King B. This is referred to as the *accession-year* method of dating, because the interval from the date of accession to the end of the calendar year is called the accession year, and is not numbered. This method is also sometimes called *postdating*, since the beginning of what was called the

first year was postdated, or postponed, until the first day of the next calendar year following the new king's coming to the throne.

**Non-Accession-Year Method of Reckoning Reigns.**—By the other method, used at times in Egypt, the new king began dating documents in his “year 1” as soon as he ascended the throne, and the year beginning at the next New Year's Day (Thoth 1 in Egypt) was called year 2. Thus the same year that began as the 35th of King A would end as year 1 of King B, and A's year 35 would be followed by B's year 2, not year 1. This causes an overlap of 1 year in reckoning a series of reigns. It adds an extra year for each reign, for it is the equivalent of inclusive reckoning, numbering both the first and the last year of every reign, when actually each king's “first year” is only the unexpired part of the last year of his predecessor. Since there is no period called accession year before year 1, this is called the *non-accession-year* method, or *antedating*.

**Both Systems Used in the Book of Kings.**—These two methods are well documented from ancient Egyptian and Babylonian records. The use of regnal-year dating is shown in the Bible by a number of date formulas. For example, Jerusalem was besieged on the 10th of the 10th month in the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign (2 Kings 25:1); and “in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar” (v. 8), Nebuzaradan came and burned the Temple. There is no indication as to whether these time statements involve the accession-year or non-accession-year reckoning. But certain synchronisms in the book of Kings, in equating a year of a king of Judah with a certain year of a king of Israel, seem to point to the conclusion that both Hebrew kingdoms used both these systems at different times. At the division, after Solomon's death, Judah seems to have been using the accession-year and Israel the non-accession-year method (see p. 147).

In order to survey briefly the differences between these two methods of regnal reckoning, let us return to the hypothetical King A, who dies in his 35th year, and is succeeded by King B. A diagram will illustrate the differing effects of the two methods on the numbering of B's reign, on the dating of events by regnal-year numbers, and on the totals of B's and succeeding reigns.

**The six paragraphs following the diagram will summarize the results**

1. In the accession-year system (upper), after the end of the year in which one king dies and the next ascends the throne, the first New Year's Day of the new reign ushers in the year 1 of the new king.
  2. In the non-accession-year system (lower), however, the year of death and accession is followed by year 2 of the new king, and so on.
- Therefore it follows, as shown by the diagram, that:
3. A king's year 2, for example, will come one year *later* if he is using the accession-year (or postdating) system than it would if he were using the non-accession-year (or antedating) method.
  4. If two scribes, using the two differing methods, date the same event (see Event on diagram) each in his own system, the scribe who uses the accession-year system will give that year a number *lower by one* than will the scribe using the non-accession-year system.
  5. The number of years recorded as the length of a reign is *lower by one* if the accession-year method is used than if the non-accession-year method is used.
  6. In a series of reigns, the sum of the regnal years for the series if counted by the accession-year system will preserve the correct total of the years elapsed; but the non-



accession-year reckoning will add an extra year for each reign and thus produce a total larger than the actual number of years elapsed.

#### **Accession-Year and Non-Accession-Year Methods Illustrated**

**The Spring and Fall New Year.**—It has been explained (see p. 109) that the Hebrews had two year reckonings, that when the numbering of the months from the spring (Nisan) was introduced in connection with the series of religious feasts at the time of the Exodus, the older reckoning of the year from the autumn (Tishri) was retained as the civil year. There is Scriptural evidence that Solomon counted the years of his reign from the autumn (see p. 134), and that Judah continued the practice (see p. 146). The record says nothing of whether the northern kingdom of Israel counted the regnal years of their kings from the spring or the fall, but there are indications, from some of the synchronisms of Kings, that Israel used the spring-beginning year.

Thus when the accession year of a king of Judah, for example, is synchronized with a certain year of a king of Israel (according to Judah's system of numbering), that means that the last six months of Judah's year overlaps the first six months of Israel's corresponding year, or vice versa. This alignment differs in various reigns, according to the date of accession. If the accession occurs in the summer, the regnal year of Judah comes six months earlier than the corresponding year of Israel, because Judah's autumn New Year's Day (Tishri 1) arrives first in the new reign, while Israel's next calendar year begins on Nisan 1 in the following spring. If, however, the king comes to the throne in winter, the next New Year's Day after his accession is that of Israel, in the spring, and consequently his regnal year as reckoned in Israel begins six months ahead of the Judah fall-to-fall year.

**Two Methods of Constructing a Chronology of the Kings.**—One who keeps in mind these principles of ancient reckoning in connection with the chronology of this period should be able to apply these principles to the problem of working out a tentative chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah from the Biblical data. But there are differing interpretations of the synchronisms, and many difficulties. Since the accession synchronisms frequently appear to disagree with the data for the lengths of the reigns, many Old Testament scholars have come to the conclusion that these difficulties indicate that the figures in the narrative are late additions to the text, largely erroneous, and of little or no value for chronology. Actually, when their true nature is understood, they are found to be amazingly consistent.

The two lines must be adjusted by assuming either certain coregencies between father and son or certain interregna between reigns, and, in addition, by allowing for different modes of reckoning. If the reigns will not fit together unless Judah is reckoned by the accession-year method and Israel by the non-accession-year method, it can be assumed, as a working hypothesis, that this was the way in which the respective kingdoms were computing their reigns at that time. And if a whole series of reigns can be interpreted in terms of such a system, the probability of the correctness of the pattern is strengthened.

**Interregna Versus Coregencies.**—The alternate methods of reconciling the difference between the total lengths of the reigns of Israel and Judah have resulted in two types of chronological schemes of the period. If, when the synchronisms require either a coregency in one line or an interregnum in the other, the former is more often used, the result is a *shorter* chronology of the period; whereas if the latter is more often used, there is a *longer* chronology. The merits of either method must be determined by the degree to

which the scheme fits all known facts, Biblical and non-Biblical. Even between points where a certain series of reigns began together and ended together in both kingdoms (as the period from the death of Solomon, when the kingdoms were first divided, to the assassination of the rulers of both Israel and Judah by Jehu), the recorded totals of the reigns do not agree. Moreover, in the period after Jehu the inequality grows greater until, at the end of the northern kingdom, the sum of the years recorded for the kings of Israel is 20 years less than the sum of the years of Judah for the same period. In the light of this sort of discrepancy, there is no way of reconciling the lengths of the regnal lines of the two kingdoms unless we assume that either the apparently longer line included overlapped reigns, or the shorter line had gaps between reigns.

If the first is true, there must have been occasions when the heir was placed on the throne with his father before the latter's death, and the total years recorded for the son included the years of his coregency as well as his sole reign. In that case the total lengths of all the reigns would exceed by some years the total time elapsed.

If the second is true, then it becomes obvious that in the shorter line there must have been an occasional interregnum when there was, for one reason or another, a disturbance at the death of a king that prevented the immediate accession of a successor. If such periods without a king were disregarded in the figures given for the successive reigns, the total time elapsed would have been longer than the records show.

We must assume one or the other; either the longer line must be shortened by coregencies, or the shorter line must be lengthened by interregna, or possibly both procedures are to be used.

As has been pointed out (see p. 135), the essential chronological data are given for each king, generally in the account of the beginning of his reign; and the data are of two kinds:

(1) *the accession synchronism* that dates the beginning of the reign in a certain year of the ruler of the other Hebrew kingdom ("Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah"; 1 Kings 22:51), and

(2) *the length of the reign* ("[Ahaziah] reigned two years over Israel").

It has been noted (see p. 139) that there is an apparent difference of one year between the accession-year reckoning (or postdating) and the non-accession-year reckoning (or antedating). Whenever, in addition to this difference, any of these time statements appear to conflict with the pattern of the other reigns, the explanation may be that there was either a coregency or an interregnum not mentioned in the narrative. Unless there is some hint in the text as to the political situation at the time, there is no inherent reason for supposing that one occurred rather than the other. The solution that brings harmony between the synchronisms in the Bible record must be accepted. This sort of adjustment does not discard the Biblical data; it merely explains them by assuming that the record did not give all the details, some of which must be inferred from the figures given. Consequently, opinions differ as to which solution is more likely.

The choice between interregna and coregencies, that is, between intervening gaps and overlapped reigns, results in assigning a longer or a shorter total period to the two Hebrew kingdoms. Since there is virtually no disagreement as to the *end* of the period in Nebuchadnezzar's day, the two methods produce an earlier or later b.c. date for the *beginning* point (the death of Solomon).

**Older Chronologies Employ Interregna.**—Older chronologists have preferred to employ interregna; by assuming gaps in the shorter regnal line they have lengthened it to match the longer one. The actual occurrence of interregna is within the bounds of possibility, especially in cases where the end of a dynasty might leave a gap without an immediate successor. However, interregna are much less likely to occur than coregencies; for in any disturbance that breaks the hereditary line it is probable that some one strong leader can make himself master of the situation. Even if there were a delay in the transfer of power, the successful contender would likely claim the whole period for his own reign. On the other hand, coregencies represent an established practice, attested in the history of several ancient nations.

The typical chronology of the Hebrew kings based on interregna, and thus lengthened by gaps, is the scheme of b.c. dates (derived from Ussher) incorporated into the Bible marginal notes in many editions of the KJV; and there are one or two other dating systems that are somewhat similar to it. Ussher, writing 300 years ago, did not have access to source documents for the chronology of the period. He had Ptolemy's Canon, but departed from it where he preferred the dates of the Greek historians of the classical period. Aside from his arbitrary placing of the completion of Solomon's Temple 1,000 years before the birth of Christ (he dates it 1004 b.c.; for his 4004 b.c. date for creation, see Vol. I, p. 195), his chronology of the Hebrew kings was determined largely by dead reckoning. In his day the Assyrian records were unknown.

Those who through the years came to accept his system of Biblical chronology were concerned only with the internal harmony of the data for the two Hebrew kingdoms. Ussher's scheme of dating came to be known as the "Biblical" chronology, and many a reader of the English Bible regarded the marginal dates as almost a part of the inspired text.

**Later Use of Coregencies.**—Then came the unearthing and deciphering of the cuneiform sources, a wealth of Babylonian and Assyrian documents furnishing chronological data contemporary with the Hebrew monarchies. It became evident that the new data did not harmonize with the older chronology based on interregna, which would put the Hebrew kings earlier than their Assyrian contemporaries. The discovery of the Assyrian *limmu* (eponym) lists resulted in a division of opinion. Some earlier authorities held that the Assyrian records, admittedly incomplete for many periods, had gaps in the chronological lists that affected the synchronism of Assyrian with Hebrew rulers; some said that both the Assyrian and the "Biblical" chronology were correct, but that the names in the Assyrian records translated as those of Biblical kings, such as Ahab and Menahem, were mistaken identifications.

On the other hand, attempts were made to work out a Hebrew chronology by using coregencies instead of interregna, thus shortening the longer line of reigns. This shorter chronology could incorporate the new Assyrian dating, which had become generally accepted as astronomically fixed by an eclipse (see p. 158), and could be fitted in with the beginning of Ptolemy's Canon in the closing years of the Assyrian Empire. Many Old Testament scholars gave up the task as hopeless and declared the Biblical data erroneous. They despaired of the internal harmony of the accession synchronisms and lengths of the reigns as recorded in the Bible, and also of the external harmony of those data with the cuneiform documents.

Later writers attempted by various methods to construct a consistent Biblical chronology that could be aligned with the accepted dating of the cuneiform documents. Some discarded the Biblical accession synchronisms and tried to keep the figures for the lengths of the reigns; others did the opposite. Since most of them have freely revised the Biblical figures in order to harmonize them, on the assumption that the numbers have been altered considerably in transmission, their results have consequently varied according to their conjectural revisions.

**Tentative Chronology Used in This Commentary.** For the purpose of dating the Hebrew kings in this commentary, a chronology has been employed that offers the prospect of assigning at least tentative b.c. dates to all the reigns. In the system adopted there is not only an internal harmony of nearly all the Biblical time statements—both accession synchronisms and figures for the lengths of the reigns—but also an external harmony between the Biblical and the Assyrian chronology. However, any discussion of the b.c. dating of these reigns will be deferred until after the explanation of the four working hypotheses on which this dating is based—hypotheses derived from experimental alignment of the reigns of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Most of the basic chronological principles of regnal reckoning used in these hypotheses have been used for decades and employed in various combinations by different writers. But no one has yet succeeded in combining them in such a manner as to construct a consistent chronological scheme of the kings that will be in *complete* harmony with all the Biblical figures and the Assyrian data as well. Therefore most writers have revised the accession synchronisms or the lengths of the reigns or both.

The value of the particular combination of these principles in the four fundamental hypotheses enumerated below is that with them as a basis a system of dating the reigns can be constructed that succeeds in harmonizing nearly all of the Biblical texts, a result not achieved by any other scheme of chronology of the kings.

The scheme of regnal dating used herein combines two very similar systems, those of two contributors to this commentary, Edwin R. Thiele and Siegfried H. Horn. It incorporates the basic principles and hypotheses used by both of them and agrees with most of Thiele's dates, but it follows Horn's chronology more closely in the one period on which they do not agree, that is, in the proposed solution of the problem of harmonizing certain apparently discrepant synchronisms connected with the reign of Hezekiah.

Since one of these writers finds it necessary to hypothesize a late editorial readjustment of several synchronisms, and the other has to leave one synchronism as a yet-unsolved problem, it can be said that neither has yet constructed an entire system of Hebrew regnal chronology that utilizes every time statement exactly as it appears in the books of Kings. Yet these two men have come nearer to doing so than any other scholar.

Thus for all practical purposes a system of Hebrew regnal dates can be arrived at that is in harmony with the time statements of the books of Kings (the one exception having been noted above), and also with the chronology of the cuneiform sources. This is possible if the Judah-Israel accession synchronisms and the recorded lengths of the reigns are interpreted according to the following four hypotheses (see Thiele's chapter 2 and Horn's article, pages 42, 43; see note 5, above):

1. That in the kingdom of Judah the years of a king's reign were reckoned as beginning in the autumn (presumably by the civil calendar year beginning with Tishri 1), while at

the same time in the kingdom of Israel the regnal years were reckoned by a spring-to-spring calendar (probably beginning with Nisan 1).

2. That Israel began to use the non-accession-year system (see p. 147) at the division of the kingdom, after the death of Solomon, but later changed to the accession-year system (see p. 148); that Judah, on the other hand, began with the accession-year system, changed over to the non-accession-year system, and later returned to its original method.

3. That the scribes of both kingdoms, recording the accession of their own kings as taking place in certain years of the rulers of the other kingdom, seem to have each numbered the years of the neighboring kings by the system of reckoning (accession-year or non-accession-year) that was used in his own country rather than that used in the neighboring kingdom.

4. That in both kingdoms coregencies between father and son were rather frequent occurrences, but that no interregna are indicated in the two Hebrew kingdoms.

With the exception of the fall-to-fall regnal year for Judah, for which the direct Biblical evidence will be noted, all these hypotheses have been arrived at experimentally. When a chronology of the period is constructed on this basis, the synchronisms between years of both kingdoms work out almost completely, avoiding difficulties that arise in working them out in other ways. These results do not eliminate the possibility that someone may in the future discover a complete scheme of the reigns with a different pattern, but at present the four hypotheses here listed seem to offer the best working basis for the reconstruction of the ancient reckoning of these reigns. These are explained on pp. 146–149 below.

## V. Relationships of Reigns in Divided Kingdom

**The Bible Data for the Reigns.**—From the death of Solomon, when the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were separated, the books of Kings introduce each king of Israel or Judah with a fixed formula in which the year of his accession to the throne is synchronized with the corresponding year of the contemporary ruler of the other Hebrew kingdom, followed by the length of his reign and—usually, in the case of Judah—the age of the king at the time of his accession. For example, “In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam [II] king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem” (2 Kings 15:1, 2).

The following tabulation of the kings arranged in the order in which they are introduced in the books of Kings gives the accession data and lengths of reigns. For the tentative b.c. dating of these reigns, see p. 77.

### Bible Data for the Reigns of Judah and Israel

| Ruler      | Kingdom | Accession Synchronism | Years of Reign |    |         |
|------------|---------|-----------------------|----------------|----|---------|
|            |         |                       | I kings        |    | I kings |
| Rehoboam   | Judah   |                       | 12:1           | 17 | 14:21   |
| Jeroboam I | Israel  |                       | 12:20          | 22 | 14:20   |
| Abijam     | Judah   | 18th of Jeroboam      | 15:1           | 3  | 15:2    |
| Asa        | Judah   | 20th of Jeroboam      | 15:9           | 41 | 15:10   |
| Nadab      | Israel  | 2d of Asa             | 15:25          | 2  | 15:25   |

|                     |        |                         |                |          |           |
|---------------------|--------|-------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Baasha              | Israel | 3d of Asa               | 15:28          | 24       | 15:33     |
| Elah                | Israel | 26th of Asa             | 16:8           | 2        | 16:8      |
| Zimri               | Israel | 27th of Asa             | 16:10          | (7 days) | 16:15     |
| Tibni               | Israel |                         | 16:21          |          |           |
| Omri                | Israel | 31st of Asa             | 16:23          | 12       | 16:23     |
| Ahab                | Israel | 38th of Asa             | 16:29          | 22       | 16:29     |
| Jehoshaphat         | Judah  | 4th of Ahab             | 22:41          | 25       | 22:42     |
| Ahaziah             | Israel | 17th of<br>Jehoshaphat  | 22:51          | 2        | 22:51     |
|                     |        |                         | II kings       |          | II kings  |
| JoramJoram          | Israel | 2d of<br>Jehoram        | 1:17           |          |           |
| Joram               | Israel | 18th of<br>Jehoshaphat  | 3:1            | 12       | 3:1       |
| Jehoram             | Judah  | 5th of Joram            | 8:16           | 8        | 8:17      |
| Ahaziah             | Judah  | 12th (11th)<br>of Joram | 8:25<br>(9:29) | 1        | 8:26      |
| Jehu                | Israel |                         | 9:12, 13       | 28       | 10:36     |
| Athaliah            | Judah  |                         | 11:1, 3        | 7        | 11:3, 4   |
| Joash               | Judah  | 7th of Jehu             | 12:1           | 40       | 12:1      |
| Jehoahaz            | Israel | 23d of Joash            | 13:1           | 17       | 13:1      |
| Jehoash             | Israel | 37th of<br>Joash        | 13:10          | 16       | 13:10     |
| Amaziah             | Judah  | 2d of<br>Jehoash        | 14:1           | 29       | 14:2      |
| Jeroboam<br>(II)    | Israel | 15th of<br>Amaziah      | 14:23          | 41       | 14:2      |
| Azariah<br>(Uzziah) | Judah  | 27th of<br>Jeroboam     | 15:1           | 52       | 15:2      |
| Zachariah           | Israel | 38th of<br>Azariah      | 15:8           | (6 mos.) | 15:8      |
| Shallum             | Israel | 39th of<br>Azariah      | 15:13          | (1 mo.)  | 15:13     |
| Menahem             | Israel | 39th of<br>Azariah      | 15:17          | 10       | 15:17     |
| Pekahiah            | Israel | 50th of<br>Azariah      | 15:23          | 2        | 15:23     |
| Pekah               | Israel | 52d of<br>Azariah       | 15:27          | 20       | 15:27     |
| Hoshea              | Israel | 20th of<br>Jotham       | 15:30          |          |           |
| Hoshea              | Israel | 12th of Ahaz            | 17:1           | 9        | 17:1      |
| Jotham              | Judah  | 2d of Pekah             | 15:32          | 16 (20)  | 15:33(30) |

|            |       |                  |       |          |       |
|------------|-------|------------------|-------|----------|-------|
| Ahaz       | Judah | 17th of<br>Pekah | 16:1  | 16       | 16:2  |
| Hezekiah   | Judah | 3d of<br>Hoshea  | 18:1  | 29       | 18:2  |
| Manasseh   | Judah |                  | 21:1  | 55       | 21:1  |
| Amon       | Judah |                  | 21:19 | 2        | 21:19 |
| Josiah     | Judah |                  | 22:1  | 31       | 22:1  |
| Jehoahaz   | Judah |                  | 23:31 | (3 mos.) | 23:31 |
| Jehoiakim  | Judah |                  | 23:36 | 11       | 23:36 |
| Jehoiachin | Judah |                  | 24:8  | (3 mos.) | 24:8  |
| Zedekiah   | Judah |                  | 24:17 | 11       | 24:18 |

**Difficulties in Harmonizing the Reigns.**—With all this information, the construction of an exact chronology of the period of the kings would seem to be an easy task. But often the accession of one king, as dated in a specific year of another, seems to be out of harmony with the data for the length of the reigns. The various attempts to harmonize the reigns and to solve the difficulties have given rise to so many revisions of the data to suit individual theories, ignoring the details of the Biblical record, that the result is, in most cases, a series of conjectures rather than a systematic chronology based on the source material.

But recent study of the chronological methods of the various ancient nations, derived from a wealth of archeological documents dated according to ancient calendars, has shown that the data in the books of the Kings can be worked into a reasonable chronology without the drastic revisions referred to. When the basic principles of these synchronisms are arrived at inductively from the Biblical data, and applied to the problem, many of the supposed difficulties vanish. After a survey (in Sec. IV) of general principles and methods of regnal reckoning and their specific applications to the Hebrew kings, the next step will be to explain thereby some of the main points in the outline of the period under consideration. Of course, no detailed, step-by-step analysis of all the reigns will be attempted in this summary.

The four general hypotheses already enumerated (see p. 144) are explained and applied in the following paragraphs.

**Judah's Year Begins in Fall, Israel's in Spring.**—There is evidence in the Bible that the kings of Judah reckoned their regnal years from the fall—presumably Tishri 1—not only in the time of Solomon (see p. 134), but also in the reign of Josiah. During repairs on the Temple, in the 18th year of Josiah's reign, the workmen found a copy of the book of the Law. Upon reading the scroll the king instituted a mighty reform and held a great Passover, the like of which had not been seen in the history of the divided kingdom (see p. 88). Now the Passover comes on the 14th of Nisan, the first month of the religious year, beginning in the spring; but in this case both the beginning of the Temple repair and the great Passover took place in the 18th year (2 Kings 22:3, 5; 2 Kings 23:23). Since it is evident that all the events described in these two chapters could not have taken place in the first two weeks of the year, obviously the 18th year did not begin with Nisan. Judah must have employed the civil calendar year beginning with Tishri. The fall reckoning would allow six months for the events described above.

These observations have long been recognized by many scholars as evidence for the fall-to-fall regnal year in Judah. Since there is evidence of such a reckoning in the time of Solomon, and again in the time of Josiah, there is no reason to doubt that the year was so reckoned throughout the history of Judah. It is interesting to note that the synchronisms between the reigns of the northern and the southern kingdoms can be harmonized on the basis of such a reckoning for Judah, whereas certain difficulties arise if we try to use a spring-to-spring year for Judah.

On the other hand, although there is no evidence in the text of the Bible, the synchronisms between the reigns of the two kingdoms seem to indicate that Israel used a year beginning in the spring. Many scholars who have reckoned these reigns by various methods have assumed that numerous apparent discrepancies in the synchronisms are due to errors in the Biblical text, and hence do not believe a reconciliation possible, or do not attempt to achieve one. Since the use of a spring-beginning year in Israel alongside a fall-to-fall year for Judah eliminates many of the supposed discrepancies, this sort of regnal reckoning is the more probable. Until someone produces a better scheme based on a different principle, it is assumed that this method, since it works best, is to be preferred. A possible reason offered for the spring year in Israel is that Jeroboam, the founder of the northern kingdom, who had been a political refugee in Egypt, may have been influenced by the Egyptian New Year which, in its rotation through the seasons (see p. 153) began in the spring in Jeroboam's day. Or he may have chosen the spring New Year's Day instead of Tishri 1, in the autumn, merely in order to be different from Judah, just as he set up a new priesthood and inaugurated a feast in the eighth month in place of the old feast of the seventh month (1 Kings 12:30–33).

**Accession-Year and Non-Accession-Year Systems.**—Evidence is found in the synchronisms that in the early years of the divided kingdoms Judah was using the accession-year system of reckoning and Israel the non-accession-year system. Rehoboam and Jeroboam began to reign approximately together after the death of Solomon, and Ahaziah of Judah and Joram of Israel died at the same time, when Jehu seized the northern kingdom. Therefore the reigns during this period should total the same for both kingdoms; but the sum of the years in these reigns recorded for Israel is higher than that for Judah. If the totals are checked reign by reign from the beginning, it will be seen that this difference increases by one year for each king. This would be accounted for if in Israel the death year of each king bore two numbers, the last of one reign and the first of the next, while in Judah the first year of each reign was that following the death year of the preceding king; that is, if Israel used the non-accession-year and Judah the accession-year reckoning.

That this is true can be demonstrated by individual cases. While Jeroboam of Israel was reigning 22 years, there were three kings on the throne of Judah: Rehoboam, 17 years; Abijam, 3 years; and Asa, to his 2d year (see table on p. 145). The exact relationship between these reigns is more complex, but from these figures it can be seen that there was no overlap of one year for each reign; the 17 years of Rehoboam, the 3 of Abijam, and the 2 of Asa in Judah total the 22 years of Jeroboam in Israel. It has been shown (diagram, p. 139, and par. 6) that it is the accession-year system that gives a correct total for a series of reigns. If Judah had used the non-accession-year system, counting the last year of each king as the first of the next, the periods of 17, 3, and 2 years would cover only 20 years of actual elapsed time instead of 22. Actually the 2d year of Asa was



recorded as the beginning of the reign that followed Jeroboam's 22 years. Obviously Judah was using the accession-year reckoning, so that the 17th year of Rehoboam was followed by the 1st of Abijam, the 3d of Abijam by the 1st of Asa, etc.

It is equally obvious that Israel was using the other system. During the long reign of Asa of Judah several kings of Israel came to the throne, in the 2d, 3d, 26th, 27th, etc., of that reign. The gaps between these regnal years appear to indicate lengths of 1, 23, 1, etc., for these shorter Israelite reigns. However, the record reads: Nadab, 2 years; Baasha, 24 years; Elah, 2 years; etc. Here, then, is an overlap: If the remainder of the year of accession is called year 1, each reign gets an extra year (p. 139, diagram and par. 2). Nadab's 2 years are necessarily synchronized with Asa's 2d and 3d years, Baasha's 24 years with Asa's 3d to 26th *inclusive*. Later we find the same thing: Omri's 12 years between the 27th and 38th of Asa, and Ahaziah's 2 years in the 17th and 18th of Jehoshaphat.

On this arrangement, with Judah counting by one system and Israel the other, both lines harmonize.

**Later Changes in Accession Reckoning.**—This system, deduced from the simple fact that it works, seems to be consistently used in the earlier parts of the books of Kings. Then there comes a time when the synchronisms disagree with the recorded lengths of the reigns unless it is supposed that the kings of Judah have begun reckoning their years by the Israelite non-accession-year system, while the data harmonize if a change to the Israelite method is assumed. This change could have occurred with the accession of Jehoram of Judah at the death of Jehoshaphat, or possibly at the usurpation of Athaliah; some think that she introduced the change and also reckoned the years of Jehoram by it in the official records. The old and new reckonings of that reign may furnish the explanation of the apparently conflicting records of the accession of Ahaziah of Judah in both the 11th and the 12th year of Joram of Israel (see 2 Kings 8:25; 2 Kings 9:29). The supposed contradiction disappears if it is assumed that both refer to the same year, the one numbered the 11th by the older accession-year system being the 12th year by the new non-accession-year method of counting. The reason for such a change is unknown, but it can logically be attributed to the influence of Israel. It is interesting to note that Jehoram, whose reign seems to introduce the change, was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel of Israel.

Half a century later the synchronisms appear to require another change; this time they point to the adoption of the accession-year system by the northern kingdom at the accession of Jehoash in the 37th year of Joash of Judah, and then the return of Judah to the same system at Joash's death, with the accession of Amaziah. There is nothing to indicate this except the interlocking of the reigns when diagramed according to the synchronisms, but a plausible cause might be found in the then-increasing influence of Assyria, which employed the accession-year reckoning.

**Each Scribe Uses His National Regnal Reckoning.**—The synchronisms seem to indicate that when the accession of a king of Judah is recorded in the book of Kings, presumably as it appeared in the official records of Judah, it is dated in terms of Judah's method of regnal-year numbering. That is, when it is dated in a year of the contemporary king of Israel, the Israelite king's regnal year is numbered by the reckoning used in Judah, even if that is different from the numbering used in Israel. Sometimes, on this basis, the number is one year lower than that reckoned in Israel; for example, the

accession of Nadab of Israel, in “the second year of Asa” of Judah, occurred in what Nadab would have called Asa’s second year, but what Asa called his “year 1,” for the year numbered 1 in the accession-year system is numbered 2 in the non-accession-year system (see p. 139). This difference, of course, disappears during the time when the two kingdoms seem to be using the same system.

It is to be expected that a scribe would use his own calendar-year numbering to record the years of a foreign king; therefore this adjustment is not surprising. But he might also be expected to begin the foreign king’s years by his own New Year’s Day, just as in later times Nehemiah reckoned the Persian king’s 20th year as beginning in the autumn, as in Judah, although the Persian year began in the spring (Neh. 1:1; 2:1). The synchronisms in Kings, however, seem not to be reckoned on that principle, for the discrepancies that appear if that sort of adjustment is made are avoided if it is assumed that the scribe or chronicler of each kingdom revised the year numbers of the other kingdom to his own country’s method of numbering, but that he did not revise the beginning of the year. That is, the principle derives its plausibility solely from the fact that it works.

**Coregencies Occur in Many Reigns.**—Many of the reigns fit into the synchronisms with the other kingdom without any overlap, but in some cases there is an apparent discrepancy unless the son came to the throne some time before the father’s death and ruled jointly with him, and thus the two reigns overlapped for a period of years. If, in order to make the accession synchronisms harmonize with the lengths of the reigns, such a coregency can be assumed without doing violence to any other synchronism, there is no reason why the coregency cannot be regarded as based on good evidence. Of course it cannot be taken as completely proved so long as there is the possibility of someone’s explaining the data equally well by a different scheme; even the occurrence of an interregnum somewhere along the line cannot be ruled out completely. Sometimes, as in the case of Uzziah, who became incapacitated for royal duties because of leprosy, there is actual narrative evidence for a coregency (2 Kings 15:5), and there is reason to conclude that a coregency is indicated for Jehoram of Judah (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1; 8:16), but most of the cases are based solely on the necessities of the Bible data. In some of these cases the total years given in Kings seem to refer to the whole reign, including the coregency; less often to only the sole reign. Each case is determined by the synchronisms.

In the chronology employed for this commentary the following coregencies are assumed to have occurred: in the kingdom of Judah, Asa-Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat-Jehoram, Amaziah-Azariah, Azariah-Jotham, Jotham-Ahaz, Ahaz-Hezekiah, and Hezekiah-Manasseh; in that of Israel, Jehoash-Jeroboam II.

**Problem Spots in This System.**—Since the purpose of this article is not to set forth a chronological scheme, but to explain the basis for the dating used in this book, it is necessary to discuss only a few typical reigns. There are, however, certain problem spots that need to be mentioned.

1. The earliest is not in the series of synchronisms in the books of Kings, but is an isolated statement in Chronicles, that apparently places the building of Ramah by Baasha in the 36th year of the reign of Asa (2 Chron. 16:1; see also 1 Kings 15:17). But Baasha died and was succeeded by his son Elah in the 26th year of Asa (1 Kings 16:6, 8). Hence he could not have built Ramah 10 years later. If, however, we understand this 36th year as referring to Asa’s dynasty, not his personal reign, the problem is solved; for the 36th year from the division of the kingdom falls within the reigns of both Asa and Baasha.

2. There is an apparent discrepancy between the statements that Joram of Israel began to reign in the 2d year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat of Judah and also in the 18th year of Jehoshaphat (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1); but that Jehoram of Judah began to reign in the 5th year of Joram of Israel (2 Kings 8:16). The explanation is that Jehoram of Judah was in his 2d year of coregency, in his father's 18th year, when Joram of Israel came to the throne, but that he succeeded his father as sole ruler only in the 5th year of Joram of Israel.

3. There seems to be no room in the charting of the chronology for a 20-year reign for Pekah if it began at the time when he overthrew Pekahiah and took the throne of Israel, but if he reckoned as his the reigns of his two predecessors—that is, the house of Menahem—the 20 years would fit in. Such a procedure is not without parallel. There is a case in Egyptian history where Harmhab counted as his own all the years of four kings: Ikhnaton, Smenkhare, Tutankhamen, and Eye. Even in English history we have the case of Charles II, who came to the throne in the Restoration of 1660, but who counted his reign from the execution of Charles I in 1649, ignoring the Cromwell period. It is possible that Pekah regarded himself as the genuine successor of the powerful dynasty of Jehu, as a patriot of the anti-Assyrian party in reaction against the “collaborationist” tendencies of Menahem, who paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser. It is even possible that, in the upheaval that put an end to Jehu's dynasty with the murder of Zachariah, Pekah had actually acquired the rule over part of Israel's territory, and so considered himself king, although he did not gain control over all of Israel until he slew Pekahiah; in that case he would not have recognized the intervening rulers as legitimate kings at all. We do not know what happened, but in the light of the historical and political background, Pekah's appropriating in his records a dozen years of reign from his predecessors cannot be considered either unprecedented or improbable.

4. Jotham is given a reign of 16 years (2 Kings 15:32, 33; 2 Chron. 27:1, 8). Yet Hoshea came to the throne in the 20th year of Jotham (2 Kings 15:30). There is no inconsistency between two totals for a reign if a coregency took place, for one can include the entire reign and the other the sole reign. But this case seems complicated by a coregency with Ahaz at the end of Jotham's reign; the combination of the synchronisms seems to indicate that his years 16–20 cover the period after Ahaz came to the throne, when Jotham was probably no longer carrying on the affairs of state. Thus in one sense his rule could have ended in his 16th year, yet during the rest of his life his regnal years could continue to be counted.

5. Some find a problem in synchronizing the reign of Hezekiah with the reign of Hoshea. But others believe that the problem is solved by assuming a coregency, precisely as has been done elsewhere when the synchronisms seem to require it. In every case the figures must be tested by the synchronisms, and on that basis assigned to either the sole reign or the coregency or both. When this method is applied to the case of Hezekiah, it is found that the specifications are all met if it can be assumed (a) that Hezekiah's accession in the third year of Hoshea was the beginning of his coregency; and (b) that the figures for his age and the length of his reign belong to his sole reign after his father's death.

On these assumptions Hezekiah's accession formula could be understood:

“Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign [as coregent with his father]. Twenty and

five years old was he when he began to reign [alone at his father's death]; and he reigned twenty and nine years [in his sole reign]" (2 Kings 18:1, 2).

A similar method of interpreting the figures in the accession formula of Ahaz has been adopted by some (see 2 Kings 16:1, 2). Actually, however, if Hezekiah's age at his father's death was 25, then Ahaz' recorded age of 20 years must have referred to the beginning of Ahaz' coregency rather than to the beginning of his sole reign. Then his age at Hezekiah's birth would have been 15, which is not at all unheard of in the ancient Near East. For the b.c. dating of Hezekiah, see page 160.

6. The greatest difficulty comes in the chronology of Ahaz. Hoshea came to the throne as the result of a conspiracy against Pekah. The Bible says he "made a conspiracy" in the 20th year of Jotham (2 Kings 15:30). The Assyrian annals record that the people overthrew Pekah and that Tiglath-pileser made Hoshea king. This year seems to have been the 12th of Ahaz (2 Kings 17:1). However, the rest of the chronological scheme, as it has been worked out from the other data in the Bible, does not harmonize with this last synchronism with the reign of Ahaz. This is the incomplete link in the chain. It has been remarked that the arrangement of the kings on which the dating in this commentary is based comes *nearest* to a complete harmony of all the Biblical and non-Biblical data now known. It must not be claimed as complete as long as this synchronism cannot be accounted for and the other reigns related properly to it. Therefore rather than resort to revision or conjecture, it is better to state frankly that this problem has not been solved. There is the possibility, of course, that the apparent discrepancy is due to a copyist's error. However, other chronological problems formerly thought to be due to such errors can now be solved because of a better understanding of ancient methods of reckoning. Hence it is not unreasonable to hope that this particular problem will, in time, be similarly solved. Perhaps some further information may be unearthed that will help; perhaps someone can build on what has already been done and arrive at a slightly different alignment of the reigns of this period that will preserve the harmony of the synchronism and also find a place for this last piece of evidence.

Some may ask: What is the value of any pattern of chronology if it is incomplete and confessedly subject to possible revision? The answer is, Our understanding of the Bible is incomplete, and our interpretation of certain texts is, at times, in need of revision. But that fact hardly warrants the conclusion some draw, that the study long given to Scripture provides no constructive approach to its understanding. On the contrary, we believe that the longer we study the Bible, the better we see its harmony, and the more fully we are persuaded that the writers of the Scripture presented a coherent, unified line of thought. The same is true of that part of the Bible devoted to chronology. The longer it is studied, the more it takes shape and orderly form, and the more meaningful become the historical records that hang upon the chronological framework.

## **VI. The Basis for the B.C. Dating of the Kings**

The preceding section deals with a tentative chronological arrangement of the reigns of the two Hebrew kingdoms *in relation to each other*. Yet even after a complete chronological pattern has been constructed for these two lines, no b.c. dates can be assigned to any reign unless there is at least one direct synchronism to peg the series down in a fixed alignment with known events in ancient history. Therefore a discussion of the historical basis for the generally accepted b.c. dating of the period must be considered.

The books of Kings refer to several rulers of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon as being contemporary with certain Hebrew kings. There is an indirect but conclusive synchronism in Assyrian records—though not in the Bible—between the reigns of Ahab and Jehu and that of Shalmaneser III (see p. 159). But the clearest and most certain evidence is found in a series of synchronisms, some of them dated to the month and day, between specific years of several of the last kings of Judah and the years of Nebuchadnezzar. Although there are slight differences of opinion on some of these synchronisms, the capture of Jehoiachin is dated beyond question in Nebuchadnezzar's 7th (Babylonian) year, in Adar, 597 b.c. (see pp. 99, 161 note). For Nebuchadnezzar's reign is fixed astronomically, not only by Ptolemy's Canon, which comes from a later time, but also by a contemporary Babylonian text giving a whole series of exact astronomical data. Therefore the explanation of the evidence for the b.c. dating will begin with the firmly established years of Nebuchadnezzar and will work backward through Ptolemy's Canon and the Assyrian limmu lists.

**The Astronomical Tablet of Nebuchadnezzar's 37th Year.**—Among the thousands of public and private documents, written on clay tablets (see Vol. I, p. 110), that have been unearthed by archeologist in Mesopotamia, two astronomical texts are of outstanding importance to chronology, for they fix the b.c. dating of the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar II and Cambyses, respectively. The one most valuable for the later period of the Hebrew kings is concerned with the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. It contains a series of observational data on the positions of various heavenly bodies throughout a complete year, running from Nisan 1, year 37, to Nisan 1, year 38 of the reign. Modern astronomers who have checked this information by astronomical computation say that the combination of data for the sun, moon, and planets, which all move in differing cycles, cannot be duplicated in any other year within centuries, if ever. Thus Nebuchadnezzar's 37th regnal year is fixed beyond doubt at 568/67 b.c. (see Vol. III, p. 88; also *SDA Bible Students' Source Book*, no. 452); and all other years in his reign are established also; the 1st year was 604/03 b.c., and the 7th year, in which he captured Jehoiachin, was 598/97 b.c. Since there are several Biblical synchronisms with Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the end of the kingdom of Judah is anchored to this b.c. dating (see p. 160), but the synchronisms between the Hebrew kings and Assyrian rulers must be located by means of Assyrian chronological lists which are linked with Nebuchadnezzar's reign through the king list known as Ptolemy's Canon.

**Ptolemy's Canon Fixed by Eclipses.**—The Greek-Egyptian astronomer Claudius Ptolemaeus, or Ptolemy, who lived near Alexandria in the 2d century of the Christian Era, wrote an astronomical work entitled *Mathematike Syntaxis* ("Mathematical Composition"). It is, however, better known by its Arabic title, the *Almagest*, because it was preserved for posterity by the Arab civilization that flourished during the Dark Ages, when Europe was sunk in ignorance of classical science and literature. This work, which was the authoritative treatise on astronomy for 1,400 years, until superseded by the theory set forth by Copernicus contains data for numerous eclipses and other celestial phenomena, dated to the year, day, and hour in the ancient Egyptian calendar. There are 19 eclipses, ranging over nearly 900 years, many of which are dated in regnal years of various kings.

As a sort of appendix to the *Almagest* is Ptolemy's Canon, or list, of kings, enumerating consecutive Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman rulers, with the lengths of the

reigns and the totals, thus furnishing a scale of years by which to reckon intervals between the observations mentioned in the *Almagest* (for the canon, see p. 154). Since its purpose was not to give a complete record of all the reigns, but to assign a regnal number to every year in the scale, it did not include any reign that lasted less than a year, and the reigns were counted by full years, ignoring the exact date of accession. The years by which it was reckoned were neither lunar nor true solar years, but the ancient Egyptian calendar year of 365 days, which wanders backward through the seasons one day every four Julian years (see Vol. I, p. 176). The starting point of the canon is the beginning of the first regnal year of the Babylonian king Nabonassar, a point that can be placed, by means of the exact intervals given in the *Almagest* between that point and the various eclipses, at noon Feb. 26, 747 b.c. This was the 1st of Thoth, the Egyptian New Year's Day, at that time (although by Nebuchadnezzar's time Thoth 1 had shifted to January, and by the time Ptolemy himself lived, it had moved back through the autumn and into July).

From Ptolemy's Canon, then, it is possible to assign b.c. dates to any regnal year of any of the kings in the list, that is, the years as reckoned in the Egyptian calendar. In the early (Babylonian) period of the Canon of Ptolemy each Egyptian year began about one to four months earlier than the corresponding lunar year beginning with Nisan. This is shown by the way in which the Egyptian years, as fixed by the eclipse data of Ptolemy's *Almagest*, are aligned with the Babylonian years as fixed in the tablet of the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar and the similar tablet from the 7th year of Cambyses (which even records one of the same eclipses mentioned in the *Almagest*).

Ptolemy wrote many centuries after the early eclipses he records, and depended on copies of the astronomical documents from which his information was originally derived. Yet the canon is corroborated wherever it can be checked by ancient Babylonian, Persian, and Egyptian documents, showing that Ptolemy's regnal numbering corresponded with the contemporary reckoning.

The canon dating harmonizes with the astronomically fixed 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar, although the *Almagest* does not mention that year. It agrees also with another eclipse in the preceding reign, and with three others in the reign of Mardokempad (Marduk-apal-iddin, or the Biblical Merodach-baladan), the earliest eclipse being only 26 years from the starting point of the canon. And since the number of years from this point back to the first year of Nabonassar agrees with the Babylonian Chronicle and the Babylonian King List A (both found on clay tablets), it can be considered settled that Ptolemy's Canon gives us exact dates as far back as 747 b.c. Furthermore, both the Assyrian king lists and the Assyrian limmu list, sometimes called the Eponym Canon, are in harmony with Ptolemy's reckoning of the lengths of the reigns wherever these lists for the close of the Assyrian Empire overlap the earlier section of the canon dating based on the eclipses. Since the complete canon is not easy to find in publications in English, a translation of it is included, for reference, on the next page.

#### PTOLEMY'S CANON OF THE KINGS

**Years of the Kings Before  
the Death of Alexander  
and the Years of  
Alexander**

*Of the Assyrians    Years    Totals*

#### **Additional Data:**

Yr. 1 of Each Reign  
by Egyptian  
Calendar

n.e.                      Year Begins

|                                  |    |     |     |                      |
|----------------------------------|----|-----|-----|----------------------|
| <i>and Medes</i>                 |    |     |     |                      |
| Nabonassar                       | 14 | 14  | 1   | Feb. 26, 747<br>b.c. |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Nadius                           | 2  | 16  | 15  | “ 23, 733            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Chinzer and<br>Porus .....       | 5  | 21  | 17  | “ 22, 731            |
| Iloulaius                        | 5  | 26  | 22  | “ 21, 726            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Mardokempad                      | 12 | 38  | 27  | “ 20, 721            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Arkean                           | 5  | 43  | 39  | “ 17, 709            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| First Interregnum                | 2  | 45  | 44  | “ 15, 704            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Bilib                            | 3  | 48  | 46  | “ 15, 702            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Aparanad                         | 6  | 54  | 49  | “ 14, 699            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Regebel                          | 1  | 55  | 55  | “ 13, 693            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Mesesimordak                     | 4  | 59  | 56  | “ 12, 692            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Second<br>Interregnum .....      | 8  | 67  | 60  | “ 11, 688            |
| Asaridin                         | 13 | 80  | 68  | “ 9, 680             |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Saosdouchin                      | 20 | 100 | 81  | “ 6, 667             |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Kinelanadan                      | 22 | 122 | 101 | “ 1, 647             |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Nabopolassar                     | 21 | 143 | 123 | Jan. 27, 625         |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Nabokolassar<br>[Nebuchadnezzar] | 43 | 186 | 144 | “ 21, 604            |
| ...                              |    |     |     |                      |
| Illoaroudam<br>[Evil–Merodach]   | 2  | 188 | 187 | “ 11, 561            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Nerigasolassar<br>[Neriglissar]  | 4  | 192 | 189 | “ 10, 559            |
| .....                            |    |     |     |                      |
| Nabonadius<br>[Nabonidus]        | 17 | 209 | 193 | “ 9, 555             |

|                                          |    |     |     |              |
|------------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|--------------|
| .....<br><i>Of the Persian<br/>Kings</i> |    |     |     |              |
| Cyrus                                    | 9  | 218 | 210 | “ 5, 538     |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Cambyses                                 | 8  | 226 | 219 | “ 3, 529     |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Darius I                                 | 36 | 262 | 227 | “ 1, 521     |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Xerxes                                   | 21 | 283 | 263 | Dec. 23 486  |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Artaxerxes I                             | 41 | 324 | 284 | “ 17, 465    |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Darius II                                | 19 | 343 | 325 | “ 7, 424     |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Artaxerxes II                            | 46 | 389 | 344 | “ 2, 405     |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Ochus                                    | 21 | 410 | 390 | Nov. 21, 359 |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Arogus                                   | 2  | 412 | 411 | “ 16, 338    |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Darius III                               | 4  | 416 | 413 | “ 15, 336    |
| .....                                    |    |     |     |              |
| Alexander of<br>Macedonia                | 8  | 424 | 417 | “ 14, 332    |

**Years of the Macedonian  
Kings After the Death of  
Alexander the King**

|                                        |              |               |     |              |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----|--------------|
| <i>Of the<br/>Macedonian<br/>Kings</i> | <i>Years</i> | <i>Totals</i> |     |              |
| Philip                                 | 7            | 7             | 425 | “ 12, 324    |
| .....                                  |              |               |     |              |
| Alexander II                           | 12           | 19            | 432 | “ 10, 317    |
| .....                                  |              |               |     |              |
| Ptolemy Lagus                          | 20           | 39            | 444 | “ 7, 305     |
| .....                                  |              |               |     |              |
| Philadelphus                           | 38           | 77            | 464 | “ 2, 285     |
| .....                                  |              |               |     |              |
| Euergetes I                            | 25           | 102           | 502 | Oct. 24, 247 |
| .....                                  |              |               |     |              |
| Philopator                             | 17           | 119           | 527 | “ 18, 222    |



|                                              |    |     |     |                  |
|----------------------------------------------|----|-----|-----|------------------|
| .....<br>Epiphanes                           | 24 | 143 | 544 | “ 13, 205        |
| .....<br>Philometor                          | 35 | 178 | 568 | “ 7, 181         |
| .....<br>Euergetes II                        | 29 | 207 | 603 | Sept. 29, 146    |
| .....<br>Soter                               | 36 | 243 | 632 | “ 21, 117        |
| .....<br>Dionysius the<br>Younger            | 29 | 272 | 668 | “ 12, 81         |
| Cleopatra                                    | 22 | 294 | 697 | “ 5, 52          |
| .....<br><i>Of the Roman<br/>Kings</i>       |    |     |     |                  |
| Augustus                                     | 43 | 337 | 719 | Aug. 31, 30 b.c. |
| .....<br>Tiberius                            | 22 | 359 | 762 | “ 20, 14 a.d.    |
| .....<br>Gaius                               | 4  | 363 | 784 | “ 14, 36         |
| .....<br>Claudius                            | 14 | 377 | 788 | “ 13, 40         |
| .....<br>Nero                                | 14 | 391 | 802 | “ 10, 54         |
| .....<br>Vespasian                           | 10 | 401 | 816 | “ 6, 68          |
| .....<br>Titus                               | 3  | 404 | 826 | “ 4, 78          |
| .....<br>Domitian                            | 15 | 419 | 829 | “ 3, 81          |
| .....<br>Nerva                               | 1  | 420 | 844 | July 30, 96      |
| .....<br>Trajan                              | 19 | 439 | 845 | “ 30, 97         |
| .....<br>Hadrian                             | 21 | 460 | 864 | “ 25, 116        |
| .....<br>Aelius—Antonine<br>[Antoninus Pius] | 23 | 483 | 885 | “ 20, 137        |
| .....                                        |    |     |     |                  |

NOTE.—The first three columns of the tabulation on the opposite page are a translation from the Greek text of Ptolemy's Canon. The heading at the top of column 1, "Of the Assyrians and Medes," refers to kings of Babylon (some of the earlier ones were Assyrian rulers). After the Babylonian kings come "the Persian Kings," whose line ends with Alexander the Great. Then Ptolemy continues with a listing of the Macedonian rulers of the Egyptian division of the defunct empire of Alexander. The list carries on through

the Roman emperors, presumably down to the date when Ptolemy lived. The second column gives the length of each reign. The third gives the accumulated total years of the era. Hence the number opposite any king's name represents, in terms of the Nabonassar Era, his last year of reign. Thus for example, the figure 226 opposite Cambyses represents his 8th, that is his last, year. His year 1 is the year 219 of the canon, the year following the total figure for the preceding king, Cyrus. Accordingly, chronologists have referred to Cambyses' first year as n.e. (Nabonassar Era) 219, and have used this n.e numbering throughout, but Ptolemy's Canon gives only the cumulative total at the end of each reign, carrying that cumulative total down only to the end of Alexander the Great's reign, and then beginning a new series of totals.<sup>5</sup>

The last two columns, *not* in Ptolemy's Canon, are added for convenience: the n.e. for the year 1 of each reign, and the b.c. date of Thoth 1, the beginning of each of these Egyptian years of the canon. Ptolemy used the old 365-day Egyptian calendar years, not the years used by the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman rulers, and not the Julian-Egyptian civil calendar as stabilized by Augustus to begin on Aug. 29 (30th every 4 years).

**The Assyrian Limmu List, or Eponym Canon.**—This overlap of the latter part of the Assyrian chronology with Ptolemy's Canon makes possible the assignment of b.c. dates to the series of names by which the Assyrians designated successive years, the limmu list, or the Eponym Canon. The ancient Assyrian practice was to designate each year, not by a number, but by the name of an annual honorary official, called a limmu (Greek, "eponym"). This office was conferred in turn upon the king and certain of his high officers, generally in a prescribed order. Lists of these named years were kept for official or business use in every city. In the year in which Tiglath-pileser III came to the throne, for example, the limmu for that year was Nabû-bêl-uşur; hence all documents were dated "in the year of Nabû-bêl-uşur." The eponym for the next year (the first year of the reign) was Bêl-dân, but in the following year (the second of the reign), the king himself held the title, and so the year was designated as "the year of Tukulti-apil-Esharra" (Tiglath-pileser). The king customarily, though not always, held the office of eponym in the second year of his reign.

The limmu list is not complete for all of Assyrian history. The extant portion, compiled from various tablets, is consecutive only for the period from about 900 to 650 b.c.; the last period (647–612) is not certain. Fortunately it overlaps Ptolemy's Canon, and is thus anchored to the b.c. dating around 700, when some of the kings of Assyria were also kings of Babylon. Since the limmu list is thus aligned with the b.c. dating near its end, every year in the series can be dated if the list as we have it is complete. In the past there have been differences of opinion concerning possible gaps in the list, but present scholarship accepts it as complete; therefore events recorded as occurring in certain eponymies are confidently dated on this basis—for example, the battle of Qarqar, in which Ahab participated, is placed in 853 b.c.

**The King Lists Aligned With the Limmu List.**—Since the Assyrian limmu list is a series of names, without numerals, its scale of years can be used only for a purely relative scheme of chronology; it must be aligned with other known dating before it can be employed to assign b.c. dates to recorded events. But some copies of portions of the list carry a notation of a key event for each year, and some have horizontal lines between reigns. Such information makes it possible to align the limmu list with the extant

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<sup>5</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jos 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Assyrian king lists as well as with the early part of Ptolemy's Canon. Several of these scales coincide (see p. 156), thus corroborating Ptolemy's Canon for the period preceding the first eclipse record, and locking the eponym list and king lists in alignment with the canon, hence with established b.c. dating.

# **NOTABLE SYNCHRONISMS BETWEEN PTOLEMY'S CANON AND ASSYRO-BABYLONIAN RECORDS**

| <i>1st<br/>Year<br/>of<br/>Reign*</i> | <i>Ptolemy's<br/>Canon</i> | <i>Years Total<br/>of<br/>Reign Years†</i> | <i>From<br/>Babylonian<br/>King List A‡</i> | <i>Years<br/>of<br/>Reign</i> | <i>Extracts From<br/>Assyrian Eponym List<br/>With Notes<br/>(Limmu) (Event Noted)</i> | <i>Assyrian King<br/>List<br/><br/>Years<br/>King of Reign</i>                 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>b.c.<br/>747/46</b>                | Nabonassar                 | 14 14                                      | Nabu-nasir                                  | [14]                          |                                                                                        |                                                                                |
| 745/44                                |                            |                                            |                                             |                               | Nabû-<br>bêl-ušur                                                                      | Tiglath-<br>pileser took<br>his seat on                                        |
| <b>744/43</b>                         |                            |                                            |                                             |                               | BeÆl-<br>daÆn                                                                          | [the<br>throne<br>Tukulti-apil- 18<br>Esharra III<br>(Tiglath-<br>pileser III) |
| <b>733/32</b>                         | Nadius                     | 2 16                                       | Nabu-nadin-zeri                             | 2                             |                                                                                        |                                                                                |
| <b>731/30</b> }                       |                            |                                            | Ukinzer }                                   |                               |                                                                                        |                                                                                |
| 730/29                                | Chinzer                    |                                            | 3                                           | 5                             |                                                                                        |                                                                                |
| 729/28                                | and                        | 5 21                                       | & Pulu                                      |                               | Naphar-<br>ilu                                                                         | The king<br>took the                                                           |
| 728/27                                | Porus                      |                                            | (Pul                                        |                               | Dûri-<br>Ashshur                                                                       | hand of Bêl<br>The king                                                        |
| 727/26                                |                            |                                            | or<br>Tiglath-<br>pileser)‡                 | 2                             | Bêl-<br>harran-<br>bêl-ušur                                                            | took the<br>hand of Bêl<br>Shalmaneser<br>took his seat<br>on                  |
| <b>726/25</b>                         | Iloulaius                  | 5 26                                       | Ululaia                                     | 5                             | Marduk-<br>bêl-ušur                                                                    | [the<br>throne<br>Shulmânu- 5<br>asharêd V<br>(Shalmaneser<br>V)               |
| <b>721/20</b>                         | Mardokempad                | 12 38                                      | iddin (Mero-                                | 12                            | Nabû-<br>târiš                                                                         | Sharru-ukîn 17<br>II                                                           |
| <b>709/08</b>                         | Arkean                     | 5 43                                       | dach-baladan)<br>Sharru-ukéÆn               | 5                             | Mannu-<br>kî-                                                                          | [Tablet:<br>Sargon's yr.<br>13]§                                               |
|                                       |                            |                                            | (Sargon II)                                 |                               | Ashshur-                                                                               |                                                                                |

|        |                   |    |                                |                         |                                    |                                    |
|--------|-------------------|----|--------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 705/04 |                   |    |                                | le'i<br>Nashur-<br>beÆl | Sennacherib<br>took his<br>seat on |                                    |
| 704/03 | 1st Interregnum 2 | 45 | Sin-ahhê-rîba<br>(Sennacherib) | 2                       | Nabu-<br>dini-<br>epush            | [the<br>throne<br>Sin-ahhê-rîba 24 |

The Babylonian Chronicle and king list agree with Ptolemy's Canon in the lengths of the reigns and in the names, except that Ptolemy's Greek spelling is quite different from the Babylonian. After the 14 years of Nabonassar and the 2 of Nabu-nadin-zeri (Ptolemy's Nadius), the Babylonian king list gives Ukinzer 3 years and Pulu (Biblical Pul) 2 years (Ptolemy: Chinzer and Porus, 5 years), whereas the Babylonian Chronicle records that Ukinzer in his 3d year was defeated by Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, who took over Babylon and himself assumed the title of king of Babylon for two years.

Thus, some years after Tiglath-pileser III (Tukulti-apil-Esharra) began his reign, according to the Assyrian king list, the notation for the year of the limmu named Naphar-ilu reads: "The king took the hand of Bel." That is, the Assyrian king went through the New Year coronation ceremony at Babylon, the rite of receiving the kingship from the god Bel, just as all Babylonian kings did annually; thus in the sight of his Babylonian subjects he became, not a foreign overlord, but a duly consecrated king of Babylon. Since the Babylonian king list calls Ukinzer's successor in Babylon "Pulu," and the Babylonian Chronicle says that it was "Tukulti-apil-Esharra," and that he died in his second year, it is generally accepted that Tiglath-pileser ruled Babylon in his last two years under the name of Pul, differing from his Assyrian throne name.

Two years after Naphar-ilu the limmu list notes the accession of Shalmaneser (V), and then the Assyrian king list attests the 1st of Shulmânu-asharêd V after the 18 years of Tiglath-pileser III. If the accession year of Shalmaneser V, the death year of Tiglath-pileser, is the same as the death year of Pulu, or the 5th of the 5 years assigned to Ukinzer and Pulu (or Chinzer and Porus), then Shalmaneser came to the throne in the year 21 of the canon, or 727/26 b.c., and the 5 years of Shalmaneser correspond to the 5 years of Ululaia, or Iloulaius, king of Babylon. Thus Shalmaneser seems also to have had a different name as king of Babylon. At the end of Shalmaneser's reign the Chaldean leader Marduk-apal-iddin (Ptolemy's Mardokempad) took Babylon and held it for 12 years. This was the Biblical Merodach-baladan. His rule in Babylon parallels the reign of Shalmaneser's successor, Sharru-ukîn, or Sargon II (called Arkean by Ptolemy from the Assyrian *arqu* meaning "second"). After 12 years Merodach-baladan was driven out by Sargon, who "took the hand of Bel" and in 709 b.c. began his five-year rule as king of Babylon. This was the year of Mannu-kî-Ashshur-le'i, in the canon year corresponding to 709 b.c. Also, several cuneiform tablets independently corroborate Sargon's 13th through 16th years of rule over Assyria as his years 1 through 4 in Babylon. The limmu list notes the accession of Sennacherib (Sin-ahhê-rîba), and then his first year is listed in both the Babylonian and the Assyrian king lists. Ptolemy, however, has a 2-year interregnum here; evidently because the memory of Sennacherib's destroying the city of Babylon resulted in the dropping out of his name in some king lists. Consequently Ptolemy's source must have named no king for those 2 years, until Bêl-ibni (Bilib) was placed over Babylon, and none for Sennacherib's last 8 years, where Ptolemy again has an interregnum.

This series of exact parallels between the Canon of Ptolemy and the limmu lists demonstrates that this is a genuine overlap of the two lists, and therefore that these years of the limmu list may be assigned the same b.c. dates as the corresponding canon years. The Assyrian list, thus fixed, can be used from this point back as a chronological scale, as far as it is complete.

**The Eclipse of 763 B.C.**—How far back is the limmu list complete? In the past this was disputed. Those who used interregna (see p. 140) to reconcile the Judah and Israel lines had to assume gaps in the limmu list, but those who used coregencies found harmony between the reigns of the Hebrew kings and their Assyrian contemporaries without assuming gaps in the list. There can be no proof of completeness, since there are no totals or known intervals against which to check the names except where they are corroborated by independent sources. The present list does not depend on merely one original. The fact that several of the various extant partial lists overlap during this period, makes it relatively unlikely that the list is incomplete here. Those who hold that there are gaps must assume that all these copies came from an older erroneous archetype that was incomplete.

A check point is the year of Bur-sagale (a name variously spelled), in which an eclipse of the sun is mentioned as taking place in the month of Simanu (Sivan). Originally there was difference of opinion as to the date of this event, for there were solar eclipses in that part of the world that could have been dated in Sivan in the years 809, 791, and 763 b.c. But the one in 763 is generally accepted today for several reasons: It was, unlike the other two, a total eclipse; it was visible nearest to Nineveh, and therefore would be the most spectacular eclipse of the period; but further, the extant eponym list, anchored firmly to the b.c. dating of the Canon of Ptolemy, places the year of Bur-sagale precisely in 763 b.c., the nearest and most likely year in which there was an actual eclipse at a time that can be dated in the month Sivan. Since this point is only 30 years away from the period of certain dating, it seems reasonable to assume that the list is correct at least this far back, and that the dating of the synchronisms between the Hebrew kings and Tiglath-pileser cannot be moved very far from the present dating of the Assyrian reigns. Back of 763, however, there is no such check point, and the possibility of gaps in the earlier portion is greater, yet there is no definite reason to doubt the completeness of the list as far back as Shalmaneser III, where we find the earliest synchronism between Assyrian and Hebrew reigns.

**Synchronisms Between Hebrew, Assyrian, and Babylonian Kings.**—If then the Assyrian limmu list can be used to date the reigns of the Assyrian kings contemporary with the divided Hebrew kingdoms, it can also be used to date the Hebrew reigns wherever they are synchronized with Assyrian kings, just as the last reigns of Judah can be dated by Nebuchadnezzar's reign. The synchronisms between Hebrew kings and those of Assyria and Babylonia must therefore be discussed under Sec. VII.

## **VII. The B.C. Dating of the Hebrew Kings**

**Contacts Between Hebrew Kings and Egyptian Pharaohs.**—The earliest mention of a foreign king in connection with a ruler of Israel or Judah is that of Shishak (Egyptian, Sheshonk), who invaded Judah in the 5th year of Rehoboam of Judah (1 Kings 14:25, 26; 2 Chron. 12:2–9). But this information does not help to locate the 5th year of Rehoboam, because the chronology of the Twenty-second Dynasty is not exactly known. Sheshonk is believed to have begun his reign about 950 b.c. The next contact mentioned is that of “So

king of Egypt” with Hoshea of Israel (2 Kings 17:4), but again there is no information to establish any exact date. On these two pharaohs, see pp. 50, 52. A third contact is that of “Tirhakah king of Ethiopia” and Hezekiah (see pp. 53, 64, 160).

**Synchronisms Between Hebrew and Assyrian Kings.**—The earliest synchronisms between Israelite and Assyrian kings do not come from the Bible, but from the annals of Shalmaneser III, in the 6th and 18th years of his reign. The first of these was the year assigned in the limmu list to Daiân-Ashshur. Not only does the annotated form of the limmu list give the name of Daiân-Ashshur in the 6th year after the one in which Shalmaneser is noted as taking his seat on the throne, but also some forms of the annals date this campaign in the 6th year of the reign. Shalmaneser’s “Monolith Inscription” records that in the year of Daiân-Ashshur the Assyrian forces went on a western campaign and at Qarqar in Syria met a defensive coalition that included Benhadad of Damascus and *Ahabbu mat Sir’ila*, or “Ahab of the land of Israel.” Twelve years later, on another expedition to the west, in his 18th year, he fought Hazael of Damascus, and received tribute from *Iaua mâr Humri* (“Jehu, son of Omri,” that is, of the land of Omri, or Israel). Shalmaneser’s Black Obelisk shows a relief of Jehu bowing before him, presenting tribute. These two years are now placed in 853 and 841 b.c., respectively. (The dates 854 and 842, based by older authorities on a single limmu list, are contradicted by all other lists.)

These two years were the last of Ahab and the first of Jehu, since there are two intervening reigns (Ahaziah, 2 years, and Joram, 12 years) totaling 12 regnal years by the non-accession-year reckoning with its overlap of one year for each reign:

#### **Twelve Years From Ahab to Jehu**

##### **Ahaziah and Jehoram (Joram) intervene with 14 regnal years**

Since the b.c. dating of Shalmaneser III seems to be established by the limmu list, the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, Joram, and Jehu of Israel are similarly established, also that of the contemporary Ahaziah of Judah, whose brief reign of one year ended in the 12th year of Joram of Israel, that is, the 18th of Shalmaneser. Insofar as our data are correct, the whole pattern of the two lines of Hebrew kings can be dated in the b.c. scale. It is from this Shalmaneser synchronism that the b.c. date for Solomon’s 4th year, the 480th from the Exodus, is placed at 967/66 b.c., and his 40th year, in which the division came, in 931/30.

Jehoash of Israel is probably the Ia’asu mentioned by Adad-nirari III of Assyria. On Pul as Tiglath-pileser, see p. 156, note ‡. The use of the singular pronoun “he” is held by some to indicate that Pul *and* Tiglath-pileser in 1 Chron. 5:26 are one person, and that the translation can read Pul, *even* Tiglath-pileser. Pekah and Ahaz are contemporaries of Tiglath-pileser (2 Kings 16:5, 10; 2 Chron. 28:19–21). The latter’s annals mention Menihimme, Paqaha, and Ausi’ (translated Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea), and it is probable, though disputed, that his “Azriau from Iauda” is Azariah of Judah.

Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria which fell “at the end of three years” (inclusive, see p. 136) in the 9th year of Hoshea and the 6th of Hezekiah (2 Kings 17:3, 4; 2 Kings 18:9, 10). Since Sargon II in his later years claimed to have taken Samaria early in his reign, some have thought that the city fell after the death of Shalmaneser, or else that Sargon was the general who actually captured the city just before his accession. But an Assyrian king’s vainglorious claim made only in the late editions of his annals incurs suspicion. The one event recorded of Shalmaneser V in the Babylonian Chronicle is the conquest of

a city; if its name is to be read as *Shamara 'in* (not *Shabara 'in*), this would indicate that Samaria fell just before the end of Shalmaneser's reign, in 723/22 b.c.

The last Biblical reference to contact between Assyria and Judah is that between Hezekiah and Sennacherib (although later Esarhaddon's annals mention Manasseh as Menasi, and Ashurbanipal likewise refers to him as "Minsie" of "Iaudi"). Sennacherib invaded the west in the 14th year of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:13) but did not take Jerusalem. This is evidently Sennacherib's "third campaign" mentioned in the Assyrian annals. The two statements that Shalmaneser (V) came against Samaria in the 4th year of Hezekiah and that Sennacherib invaded Judah in the 14th year of the same king (2 Kings 18:9, 13) do not, as might appear at first glance, conflict with the Assyrian records of the intervening 17-year reign of Sargon II. This interval is a strong indication of a coregency for Hezekiah; it would put Shalmaneser's invasion in the 4th year of the coregency and Sennacherib's in the 14th year of the sole reign.

Although some commentators take account of only one attack on Judah by Sennacherib, the Bible narrative lends itself also to the interpretation that allows for a second invasion late in Hezekiah's reign (see pp. 64, 87). Commentators who believe in a second campaign differ as to where the Biblical narrative makes the transition. However, the mention of "Tirhakah [Egyptian, Taharka] king of Ethiopia" (2 Kings 19:9) as threatening Sennacherib at this time seems to refer to a time near the end of Hezekiah's reign, for Taharka, a king of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt, which was Nubian, or "Ethiopian," began to reign approximately 690 b.c. at the age of 20 (see p. 53), according to present evidence that was published in 1949. This would have been within a very few years of the end of Hezekiah's 29 years of sole reign (see PK 339). Thus the known date of Shalmaneser V and the approximate dating of Taharka of Egypt combine to favor the view of 29 years plus a coregency for Hezekiah.

**Synchronisms Between Kings of Judah and of Babylon.**—The final reigns of Judah synchronize with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (whose 37th year is astronomically fixed), and thus can be given b.c. dates. These may be tabulated:

| Babylonian<br>Years of<br>Nebuchadnezzar,<br>B. C. |        | Yrs. of<br>Kings of<br>Judah (fall–<br>to–fall),<br>B.C. | Notation                    | Text                             |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1st                                                | 604/03 | 4th<br>Jehoiakim<br>605/04                               | 23d from 13th [of<br>Josiah | Jer. 25:1, 3                     |
| 8th                                                | 597/96 | Deportation<br>of<br>Jehoiachin<br>597                   | Reign, 598/97               | 2 Kings 24:8, 12                 |
| 18th                                               | 587/86 | 10th<br>Zedekiah<br>588/87                               |                             | Jer. 32:1                        |
| 19th                                               | 586/85 | 11th<br>Zedekiah<br>587/86                               | City falls, 586             | 2 Kings 25:2-8; Jer. 52:5,<br>12 |

These dates agree with the most recent finds when Jehoiakim's 4th year is aligned with Nebuchadnezzar's 1st, Jehoiachin's deportation "when the year was expired" (2 Chron. 36:10) with Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year, and Jerusalem's fall with the latter's 19th, if the Jewish fall-to-fall year is taken into account.

Ezekiel, who was taken captive to Babylon with Jehoiachin, frequently dates events by years of this captivity, for example:

Ezekiel's vision of the siege, 9th yr. of captivity—Eze. 24:1, 2 (see the same date for the beginning of the siege—2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 52:4).

News of the city's fall reaches Ezekiel in 10th month, 12th year—Eze. 33:21 (see fall of the city in 4th month of 11th year of Zedekiah and 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar—Jer. 39:2; 52:6–14).

Ezekiel's vision in the 25th year of the captivity, the 14th after the city was smitten—Eze. 40:1.

These dates do not determine whether Ezekiel computed the years of Jehoiachin's captivity from the spring or fall, or by anniversary reckoning from date of capture. These alternatives, along with differing opinions on the alignment of the 4th year of Jehoiakim and the 1st of Nebuchadnezzar, result in different dates for Ezekiel's vision of the siege, and the news of the city's fall.

Ezekiel's reckoning, however, does not necessarily apply to another date formula given in terms of the captivity of Jehoiachin, the release of the captive king in the 12th month of the 37th year. Amel-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar's successor, took him from prison in Babylon "in the year that he began to reign" (2 Kings 25:27) or "in the *first* year of his reign" (Jer. 52:31; *first* being a supplied word). These two texts, respectively, read literally: "in the year when he was (or became) king" (2 Kings 25:27), and "in the year of his kingship" (Jer. 52:31). Some have considered "the year" of Amel-Marduk to be, on the analogy of the Arabic, his year 1, since it was *the* year—indeed, the only full calendar year—of his reign, for he died in his year 2. Others say that it means his accession year because "in the year that he reigned" may be taken to imply that in which he *began* to reign. If in Kings and Jeremiah the years of Jehoiachin's captivity are counted inclusively from the fall-to-fall year in which he was taken, the 12th month of the 37th year falls in the Babylonian accession year of Amel-Marduk, in the spring of 561 b.c., which would be in year 1 as counted by Judah's fall-to-fall year. It is not necessary to assume that Ezekiel's reckoning in Babylon was the same as that used in Judah in the closing days of the monarchy. It could

be an example of differing reckonings. This point, however, has no effect on the date of the end of the kingdom of Judah.

**Assigning B.C. Dates to the Hebrew Lines.**—Assuming, then, that we have a scheme of the reigns of the Hebrew kings that is at least relatively consistent and tentatively correct, we can superimpose on that pattern the scale of b.c. dating to make the years of Nebuchadnezzar, whose b.c. equivalents are known, synchronize with the last reigns of Judah, and can work back from there. If the earlier synchronisms between Hebrew kings and the Assyrian rulers can be fitted in, without doing violence to the Biblical figures, during the time when the limmu list and the Canon of Ptolemy overlap; and if the still earlier period of Shalmaneser III with Ahab and Jehu can be harmonized also, it will appear that the reconstruction of the chronology of this period is reasonably correct.



This does not necessarily mean that every detail can be considered absolutely fixed, for where so many overlapped reigns must be allowed for, there may be more than one feasible way to adjust the relationships of these reigns. But the general scheme may be regarded as based on sound principles and usable as a working hypothesis for dating Biblical events. Absolutely exact dates can be given for only those events that are directly and unambiguously connected with some fixed point of reference, like the synchronisms of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Even in such cases dates given in terms of lunar months cannot be dogmatically dated to the very day without allowing room for the variation of a day, sometimes of a month (see pp. 119, 120).

Although the exact chronology of all the Hebrew reigns is not regarded as fixed, the pattern is sufficiently complete to allow the listing of b.c. dates as at least tentative approximations (see tabulation on p. 77) for the reader's convenience. These dates are *not* given as a final statement of the exact chronology. Though the last few reigns of Judah are aligned with the Babylonian years of Nebuchadnezzar, the b.c. dates of earlier kings are to be taken as approximate, although possibly, and in most cases very probably, correct.

Other dates are relatively less certain, as they are distant in time from such fixed dates, or as they are involved in some of the adjustments, such as assumed coregencies, made solely on the basis of making the synchronisms fit on paper—as must be done provisionally if a complete scale is to be constructed at all.

The possible uncertainty of a few days, or even a few years, does not outweigh the value of a series of dates presented as a working hypothesis for the reader's convenience, but it is well to preserve an open mind for the possible revision of some of these minutiae when additional information becomes available.

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<sup>6</sup>Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Jos 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.